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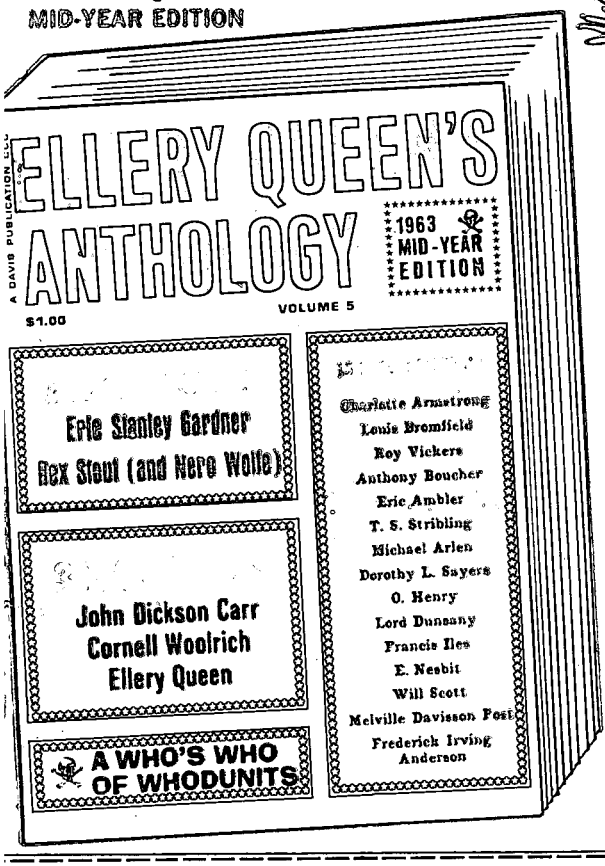

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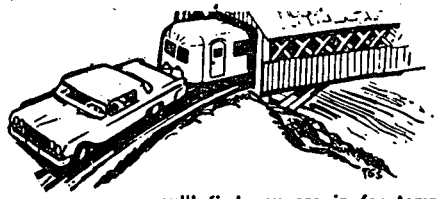

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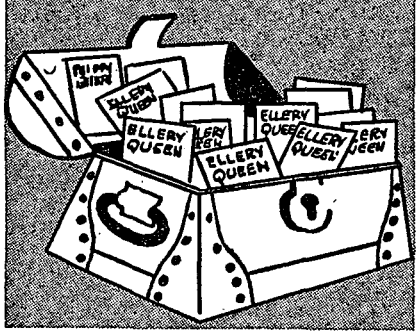

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

Perry Mason in

AUTHOR: **ERLE STANLEY GARDNER'S**

TITLE: ***The Case of the Crying Swallow***

TYPE: Detective Short Novel

DETECTIVE: Perry Mason

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *It started as a "missing wife" case. But why should an adoring wife leave Major Winnett, millionaire yachtsman, polo player, war hero, and gentleman? Perry Mason on the trail of a beautiful redhead . . .*

PERRY MASON, TILTED BACK IN HIS walnut desk chair, was studying a recent decision of the State Supreme Court when Della Street, his secretary, opened the door from the outer office, advanced to the desk, and quietly laid ten crisp one-hundred-dollar bills on the blotter.

Mason, too engrossed to notice what she was doing, continued his reading.

Della Street said, "A client sends his card."

Mason straightened in the swivel chair and for the first time caught sight of the money which Della Street had so neatly spread out.

"He said his name was Mr. Cash," Della Street explained. "Then he handed me ten one-hundred-dollar bills and said these were his cards."

Mason grinned. "What does Mr. Cash look like?"

"He's a floor walker."

Mason raised his eyebrows. "A *floorwalker?*"

"No, no, not a department-store floorwalker! I mean that he's a floor *walker,* the same as you are. He paces the floor when he's worried. He's doing a carpet marathon out

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there right now. He's distinguished-looking, has a slight limp, is deeply tanned, and . . . and I've seen him somewhere before. Oh, now I have it. I've seen his picture!"

"Give."

"Major Claude L. Winnett, polo player, yachtsman, millionaire playboy. When the war came, he quit being a playboy and became an aviator, bagged a whole flock of German planes and then was captured, liberated last fall, discharged because of his wound, returned to his doting mother and . . ."

Mason nodded. "I remember reading about the chap. He got a citation or something. Didn't he get married?"

"About four or five weeks ago," Della Street said. "That was where I first saw his picture—in the paper. Then again last week a reporter for the society supplement paid a visit to the Winnett home—one of the old-time country estates with stables of polo ponies, riding trails, hedges, private golf course . . ."

"Show him in," Mason said. "But let him know first that you've placed him. It may save time."

Major Winnett, lean, fit, bronzed, and nervous, followed Della Street into the office. The excitement and anxiety of his manner were more noticeable than his slight limp. A well-modulated voice and patrician bearing made his surrender to emotion all the more impressive.

"Mr. Mason," he said as soon as he was in the room, "I had intended to keep my identity a secret and ask you to represent another person. Now that your secretary has recognized me, I'll put my cards on the table. My wife has disappeared. She needs your help. She's in trouble of some sort."

"Tell me about it," Mason said.

Major Winnett reached into his pocket, took out a piece of letter paper, and handed it to Mason.

The lawyer opened the letter, read:

"Claude, my darling, there are some things that I can't drag *you* into. I thought I had a way out, but I guess I didn't. Our happiness was such a beautiful thing. But beautiful things are always fragile. Don't worry about anything. I am responsible, and I am not going to let you suffer because of what you have done for me. Goodbye, my darling.—MARCIA"

"What does she mean by saying she's responsible and not letting you suffer because of what you have done for her?" Mason asked.

Major Winnett's manner was uneasy. "My marriage was not exactly in accordance with the wishes of my mother. I went ahead with it despite her objections."

"Spoken objections?"

"Certainly not."

"Yet your wife knew of them?"

"Women feel many things without the necessity of words, Mr. Mason. I want you to find her and straighten things out for her."

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"And then report to you?"

"Certainly."

Mason shook his head.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the faint rumble of traffic and the breathing of Mason's client. Then Major Winnett said, "Very well. Do it your way."

"When did your wife leave?"

"Last night. I found this note on the dresser about midnight. I thought she had previously retired."

"Is there any reason why your wife would have been vulnerable to what we might call an outside influence?"

"Absolutely not—if you mean blackmail."

"Then tell me why your wife wasn't free to come to you with her troubles."

"I don't know, unless it's on account of my mother."

"What about her?"

"My mother is a very unusual person. When my father died, a dozen years ago, mother stepped in and took charge. She is living in a bygone era. She has old-fashioned ideas."

"The proprieties?" Mason asked.

"Not so much the proprieties as . . . well, class distinctions, the aristocracy of wealth and that sort of thing. I think she would have been more happy if I had married someone more in our own set."

"Who, for instance?"

"Oh, I didn't say any particular person," Major Winnett said hastily.

"I know you didn't. That's why I'm asking you."

"Well, perhaps Daphne Rexford."

"You think this caused your wife to leave?"

"No, no. Not directly. My mother has accepted Marcia into the family. Whatever may have been Mother's ideas about the marriage, Marcia is now one of us—a Winnett."

"Then suppose you tell me what you mean when you say 'not directly.' "

"Marcia would have done anything rather than subject me to any notoriety because she knew how my mother felt about that. You see, Mr. Mason, we live in a large, rather old-fashioned estate surrounded by hedges, with our private bridle paths, high wire fences, locked gates, no-trespassing signs, and all the rest. The more the world moves in a way that meets with the disapproval of my mother, the more she tries to shut that part of the world out from her life."

"Anything unusual happen within the last few days?" Mason asked.

"A burglar entered our house Tuesday night."

"Take anything?" Mason asked.

"My wife's jewelry, valued at perhaps twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars, although I don't suppose a person could get that for it. It had been insured for fifteen thousand dollars."

"Had been?" Mason asked.

"Yes, my wife canceled the in-

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surance. As it happened, only the day before the burglary."

Major Winnett glanced almost appealingly at the lawyer.

"Canceled her insurance," Mason said, "and then twenty-four hours later the burglary took place?"

"Yes."

"And you fail to see any connection between those two facts?"

"I am certain there is none," Major Winnett said hastily. "My wife's reasoning was absolutely sound. She had carried this insurance policy and paid high premiums on it while she was living in apartments and hotels because she wanted to keep her jewelry with her and wanted to wear it. But when she married me and came to live in Vista del Mar, it seemed hardly necessary to continue paying high premiums."

"Tell me more about that burglary and why you didn't report it to the police."

"How did you know we didn't report it to the police?"

"Your facial expression," Mason said dryly.

"That was purely on account of the fact that my mother . . . well, you know, the newspaper notoriety and . . ."

"Tell me about the burglary," Mason said.

Major Winnett spoke with the rhythm of a man who is carefully choosing his words. "I am a sound sleeper, Mr. Mason. My wife is not. On Tuesday night I was awakened by the sound of my wife's scream."

"What time?"

"I didn't look at my watch at the time but I did look at it a few minutes later and as nearly as I can place the time, it was around quarter to one."

"How long had you been in bed?"

"We retired about eleven."

"And you slept until your wife screamed?"

"Well, I have, in the back of my consciousness, a vague recollection of a swallow crying."

Mason raised his eyebrows.

"You are, of course, familiar," Major Winnett went on hastily, "with the famed swallows of the Mission of San Juan Capistrano?"

Mason nodded.

"The nesting place of those swallows is not confined to the Mission. They get more publicity at the Mission because they leave on a certain day and return on a certain day. I believe that the time of their return can be predicted almost to the hour. A very unusual sense of keeping a calendar. How they are able to return year after year . . ."

"And you have some of those swallows at your house?" Mason interrupted.

"Yes. They are a nuisance. Their nests are built out of mud and are fastened to the eaves. Our gardener knocks them down as soon as he detects the birds building, but in case one of them eludes his vigilance and the nest is built, then we

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don't disturb it, because the birds lay eggs very soon after the nests are built."

"Go on," Mason said.

"Well, this particular swallow's nest was located in a very unfortunate place. The main residence at Vista del Mar is a large Spanish-type house with the tile roofs and a white exterior. My bedroom is on the second floor with a projecting balcony. The tile projects out over that balcony and the birds had made their nest in such a place that if a man climbed over the balcony rail, he'd be within a few feet of the nest."

"And a man did climb over that rail?"

"Evidently that is what happened. We found a ladder that had been placed against the side of the house. The intruder had climbed up the ladder. In doing so, he disturbed the swallows. They have a peculiar throaty chirp."

"And you heard that?"

"I either heard it or dreamed that I did. My wife doesn't remember it, and she is a much lighter sleeper than I am, but I don't think I was mistaken."

"Then you went back to sleep?"

"Apparently I did. I remember hearing the protestations of the swallows and, while I was aroused from a sound slumber, I didn't thoroughly waken. I dozed off again and was soon in a deep sleep from which I was awakened by my wife's scream."

"She saw the burglar?"

"She was aroused by some noise in the room. She saw this man standing at her dresser. At first she thought I had gone to the dresser for some purpose and she started to speak to me. Then she looked over and saw that I was in my bed . . ."

"There was enough light for that?"

"Yes. The moon was giving some light."

"What happened?"

"The man heard the motion—some sound of the bedsprings, I guess. He darted out to the balcony. My wife screamed and that awakened me, but it took me a few seconds to get oriented, to realize where I was and what was happening. By that time the man had made his escape."

"And you think the swallows were crying because the man disturbed them?"

"That's right. When he entered the building, he must have climbed over the balcony rail and touched the nest."

"When did your wife cancel the insurance?"

"Monday afternoon."

Mason toyed with his lead pencil, asked abruptly, "What happened Monday morning?"

"We all four breakfasted together."

"Who's the fourth?"

"Helen Custer, my mother's nurse."

"Your mother isn't well?"

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"She has a bad heart. Her physician feels it's advisable to have a nurse in the house."

"She's been with you long?"

"For three years. We consider her very much one of the family."

"You breakfasted and then what?"

"I wrote letters. My mother . . . I don't know exactly where she *did* go. Marcia went riding."

"Where?"

"Heavens, I don't know. One of our bridle paths."

Mason said, "I believe it rained Sunday night, didn't it?"

Major Winnett looked at him curiously. "What," he asked, "does that have to do with it?"

"Skip it," Mason said. "What happened next?"

"Nothing. My wife returned about eleven."

"When did she tell you she was going to cancel the insurance?"

"That was just before lunch. She telephoned to the insurance company, then she wrote them a letter confirming her action."

"Did you notice anything unusual in your wife's manner?"

"Nothing." Major Winnett said it so swiftly that it seemed the answer had been poised on his tongue, waiting merely for Mason's question.

Mason said, "Well, it's ten thirty. I want to get Paul Drake of the Drake Detective Agency. We'll make a start out at your place and go on from there. I'll leave here about eleven. Does your mother know your wife has left?"

Major Winnett cleared his throat. "I told her my wife was visiting friends."

"How will you account for us?" Mason asked.

"How many will there be?"

"My secretary Miss Street, Paul Drake the detective, myself, and perhaps one of Mr. Drake's assistants."

Major Winnett said, "I'm working on a mining deal. I can explain to my mother that you're giving me some advice in connection with that. Your detective wouldn't mind posing as a mining expert?"

"Not at all."

"You'll come to the house and . . . will you want to stay there?"

Mason nodded. "I think we'd better. And I'll want photographs and a description of your wife."

Major Winnett took an envelope from his inside pocket, extracted nearly a dozen photographs. "I brought these along. They're snapshots. She's twenty-five, redheaded, bluish gray eyes, five feet two, a hundred and fifteen, and as nearly as I can tell from checking the clothes that are left in the closet, she's wearing a checkered suit, sort of a gray plaid. It's the one that she's wearing in this picture."

Mason studied the photographs, then reached for the envelope. "All right," he said, "we'll be out. You can go on ahead and see that all necessary arrangements are made."

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The city of Silver Strand Beach lay in a sheltered cove on the lee-side of a peninsula. The Winnett estate dominated this peninsula, its wire fences with forbidding *No Trespassing* signs stretching for some two and a half miles. The Spanish-type house, perched on the summit some five hundred feet above the ocean, commanded a view in all directions.

Mason's car swept around the last curve in the graveled driveway, came to a stop in front of the imposing house as he said to Paul Drake, "I think the cancellation of that insurance policy is, perhaps, the first indication of what she had in mind, Paul. And I think that may have some connection with the horseback ride she took Monday morning."

Paul Drake's professionally lugubrious face didn't change expression in the least. "Anything to go on, Perry?"

"It rained Sunday night," Mason said. "It hasn't rained since. If you could find the path she took, it's quite possible you might be able to track her horse."

"For the love of Pete, do I have to ride a horse?"

"Sure. Tell the groom you'd like to ride. Ask him about some of the bridle paths."

"I can't see anything from a horse," Drake complained. "When a horse trots, I bounce. When I bounce, I see double."

"After you get out of sight of the house, you can lead the horse," Mason suggested.

"How about me?" Della asked.

"Try and get acquainted with the nurse," Mason suggested, "and take a look around."

Major Winnett himself answered Mason's ring, and the swift efficiency with which he installed them in rooms, introduced them to his mother, and Helen Custer, the nurse, showed that he had already made his preliminary explanations.

While Drake departed for the stables, after having expressed his spurious enthusiasm for horseflesh, Major Winnett took Mason on a tour of inspection.

Once they were alone in the upper corridors, Major Winnett asked quickly and in a low voice, "Is there anything in particular you want to see?"

"I'd like to get familiar with the entire house," Mason said guardedly. "But you might begin by showing me your room."

Major Winnett's room was on the south side. Glass doors opened on the balcony, from which the ocean could be seen shimmering in the sunlight.

"That's the swallow's nest?" Mason asked, indicating a gourd-like projection of mud which extended from the tiles just above the balcony.

"Yes. You can see that a person climbing a ladder . . ."

"Was the ladder already there?" Mason asked.

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"Yes. The handyman had been doing some work on a pane of glass on the side of the bedroom. He had left the ladder in position that night because he intended to finish it the next morning. Damn careless of him."

"In that case," Mason said, "your thief was an opportunist, since he didn't bring his own ladder."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"One who was, moreover, apparently familiar with the house. How about your servants?"

"You can't ever tell," Major Winnett said. "Particularly these days. But I *think* they're all right. Mother pays good wages and most of the help have been with her for some time. However, she *is* rather strict and there is a certain turnover."

"You own virtually all the land on this peninsula?"

"Quite a bit of it, but not all. In a moment we'll go up to the observation tower and I can show you around from there. Generally, we take in about three-fourths of the peninsula. There is a strip out on the end where the county maintains a public camp-ground."

"The public can reach that camp without crossing your estate?"

"Yes. Our line runs along by the grove of trees—beautiful oaks that offer a place for picnics. Picnickers are always scattering papers and plates around. We try to persuade them to go on down to the public camp grounds on the end of the peninsula."

"So anyone who came out here at night would have been a trespasser?"

"Definitely."

"And having taken that risk, must have had some specific objective in mind, and would, therefore, if he were at all prudent, have arranged some manner of reaching his objective?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Therefore," Mason went on, "your burglar must either have been someone who knew that the ladder was here, or else it was an inside job."

"But how could anyone have known the ladder was here?"

Mason said, "If you can see the camp and the picnic grounds from here, it is quite possible that someone in the camp or picnic grounds could see the house."

"Yes, the house is quite a landmark. You can see it for miles."

"And perhaps a man, looking up here about dusk and noticing that a ladder had been left in place, would have decided it might be worthwhile to climb that ladder."

"Yes, I suppose so. However, Mr. Mason, I can't see that there is the slightest connection between the theft of my wife's jewelry and her disappearance."

"Probably not," Mason said.

They finished their tour with a trip up a flight of stairs to the place which Major Winnett described as "the tower."

Here was a belfry-like room, fif-

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teen feet square, with plate glass windows on all sides. In the center, a pair of eighteen-power binoculars attached to a swivel on a tripod could be turned and locked in any position.

"In times past," Major Winnett explained, "when there was more merchant shipping up and down the coast, we used to enjoy looking the boats over. You see, these binoculars can be swung in any direction. Now I'll point them toward town and . . ."

"Just a minute," Mason warned sharply, as Major Winnett reached for the binoculars. "They seem to be pointed toward that grove of trees. If you don't mind, I'd like to look through them."

Mason looked through the powerful prismatic binoculars. The right eye showed only a blur, but the left showed a shaded spot under the clump of big live oaks where the road crossed a mesa before dipping down through a little canyon to again come into view as it swung out toward the picnic and camping grounds on the extreme tip of the promontory.

"There's no central focusing screw," Major Winnett explained. "You have to adjust each eyepiece individually. Perhaps . . ."

"Yes, so I see," Mason said, removing his eyes from the binoculars.

"Here is what I mean," Major Winnett went on. "You simply screw this eyepiece . . ."

Mason courteously but firmly arrested the Major's hand. "Just a moment, Major," he said. "I want to look at that right eyepiece."

"Someone must have been tampering with it. It's way out of proper adjustment," the Major said.

"The left eyepiece is at zero adjustment. I take it that means a perfectly normal eye," Mason said, "whereas, on this right eyepiece, there is an adjustment of negative five. I take it those graduations are made so that a person can remember his own individual adjustment and adjust the binoculars readily."

"I suppose so. The figures represent diopters."

"And an adjustment of negative five certainly blurs the entire . . ."

"That can't be an adjustment," the Major interposed. "Someone has idly turned that eyepiece."

"I see your point," Mason said and promptly turned the eyepiece back to zero. "There," he announced, "that's better."

It was now possible to make out details in what had before been merely a patch of shadow.

Mason swung the binoculars to the picnic ground and could see quite plainly the masonry barbecue pits, the tables and chairs. Beyond them, through the trees, he caught a glimpse of the ocean.

"A beach down there?" he asked.

"Not a beach, but a very fine place for surf fishing."

Mason swung the binoculars once more toward the clump of trees

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and the wide place in the road. "And you say people picnic there?"

"Occasionally, yes."

"From that point," Mason said, "one could see the house quite plainly with binoculars."

Mason waited until he saw Major Winnett leave the house, walking toward the stables. Then the lawyer quietly opened the door of his room, walked down the corridor to Winnett's bedroom, crossed the balcony and climbed to the rail.

The entrance of the swallow's nest was too small to accommodate the lawyer's hand but he enlarged the entrance by chipping away bits of the dried mud with his thumb and forefinger.

From inside the nest came faint rustlings. An immature beak pushed against Mason's finger.

The parent swallows cried protests as they swooped in swift, stabbing circles around the lawyer's head, but Mason, working rapidly, enlarged the opening so that he could insert his hand into the nest. He felt soft down-covered bodies. Below them his groping fingers encountered only the concave surface of the nest.

A frown of annoyance crossed the lawyer's face. He continued groping, however, gently moving the young birds to one side. Then the frown faded as the tips of his fingers struck a hard metallic object.

As the lawyer managed to remove this object, sunlight scintillated an emerald and diamond brooch into brilliance.

Mason swiftly pocketed the jewelry, drew back from the fierce rushes of the swallows. He dropped to the floor of the balcony and returned to the bedroom.

Back in the bedroom he made a swift, thorough search of the various places where small objects might be concealed. A sole leather gun case in the back of a closet contained an expensive shotgun. Mason looked through the barrels. Both were plugged with oiled rags at breach and muzzle.

Mason's knife extracted one of the rags. He tilted the barrels, and jewelry cascaded out into his palm —rings, earrings, brooches, a diamond and emerald necklace.

Mason replaced the jewelry, inserted the rag once more, put the barrels back in the leather case, and returned the case to the closet.

Preparing to leave the room, he listened for a few moments at the bedroom door, then boldly opened it and stepped out, retracing his steps toward his own room.

He was halfway down the corridor when Mrs. Victoria Winnett appeared at an intersecting corridor and moved toward Mason with stately dignity and a calm purpose.

"Were you looking for something, Mr. Mason?" she asked.

The lawyer's smile was disarming. "Just getting acquainted with the house."

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Victoria Winnett was the conventional composite of a bygone era. There were pouches beneath her eyes, sagging lines in her face, but the painstakingly careful manner in which every strand of hair had been carefully coiffed, her face massaged, powdered, and rouged, indicated the emphasis she placed on appearance; and there was a stately dignity about her manner which, as Della Street subsequently remarked, reminded one of an ocean liner moving sedately up to its pier.

Had she carefully rehearsed her entrance and been grooming herself for hours to convey just the right impression of dignified rebuke, Mrs. Victoria Winnett would not have needed to change so much as a word. "I think my *son* wanted to show you around," she said as she fell into step at Mason's side.

"Oh, he's done that already," Mason said with breezy informality. "I was just looking the place over."

"You're Mr. *Perry* Mason?"

"That's right."

"I had gathered from what I read about your cases that you specialize mostly in trial work."

"I do."

"*Murder* trials?"

"Oh, I handle lots of other cases. The murder cases get the most publicity."

"I see," she said in the tone of one who doesn't see at all.

"Nice place you have here," the lawyer went on. "I am very much interested in that observation cubicle on top of the house."

"It was my husband's idea. He liked to sit up there. Didn't I hear the swallows crying out there?"

"I thought *I* heard them too," Mason said.

She looked at him sharply. "We try to keep them from nesting here but occasionally the gardener fails to see a nest until it is completed; then we don't disturb the nest until after the young birds have hatched. They're noisy and talkative. You can hear them quite early in the mornings. I trust they won't disturb you. Are you a sound sleeper, Mr. Mason?"

They had paused at the head of the stairs. Mrs. Winnett apparently did not intend to go down, so Mason, standing poised on the upper stair, used strategy to terminate the interview.

"My friend, Drake, is looking over the horses, and if you'll pardon me I'll join him."

He flashed her a smile and ran swiftly down the stairs.

In the patio Della Street caught Perry Mason's eye, gave him a significant signal, and moved casually over to the driveway where she climbed into the car and sat down.

Mason walked over. "I think Paul Drake has something," he said. "I'm going down and look him up. He's just coming in on the bridle path. What have you got?"

"I can tell you something about the nurse, chief."

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"What?"

"In the first place, if a woman's intuition counts for anything, she's in love with the Major—one of those hopeless affairs where she worships him from a distance. In the second place, I think she has a gambling habit of some sort."

"Races?"

"I don't know. I was up in the cupola just after you were. There was a pad of paper in the drawer of the little table up there. At first it looked completely blank. Then I tilted it so the light struck it at an angle and could see that someone had written on the top sheet with a hard enough pencil to have made an imprint on the sheet underneath. Then the top sheet had been torn off."

"Good girl! What was on the sheet of paper?"

"Evidently some gambling figures. I won't bother to show you the original at this time but here's a copy that I worked out. It reads like this: *These numbers* on the first line, then down below that, *called;* then down below that a space and 5″5936; down below that 6″8102; down below that 7″9835; down below that 8″5280; down below that 9″2460; down below that 10″1320."

"Anything else?" Mason asked.

"Then a line and below the line, the figure 49″37817. That looks like some sort of a lottery to me. I learned Mrs. Winnett has been up in the cupola lately and since *she'd* hardly be a gambler, I assume the nurse must have written down the figures."

Mason said thoughtfully, "Notice the last three numbers, Della, 5280, 2640, 1320. Does that sequence mean something to you?"

"No, why?"

Mason said, "5280 feet in a mile."

"Oh, yes, I get that."

"The next number, 2640 feet, is a half mile, and the last number, 1320 feet, is a quarter mile."

"Oh, yes, I see now. Then that double mark means inches, doesn't it?"

"It's an abbreviation of inches, yes. What does this nurse seem like, Della? Remember, I only barely met her."

"Despite her muddy complexion, straight hair, and glasses, her eyes are really beautiful. You should see them light up when the Major's name comes up. My own opinion is this nurse could be good-looking. Then Mrs. Winnett would fire her. So she keeps herself looking plain and unattractive so she can be near the Major."

"Look here," Mason said, "if you've noticed that within an hour and a half, how about Mrs. Victoria Winnett? Doesn't she know?"

"I think she does."

"And hasn't fired the nurse?"

"No. I think she doesn't mind if the nurse worships the ground the Major walks on but doesn't presume to raise her eyes to look at him, if you get what I mean."

"I get it," Mason said thought-

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fully, "and I don't like it. Wait, here comes Paul now."

Drake, walking stiffly, joined them.

"Find anything, Paul?" Mason asked.

"I found something," Drake conceded, "but I don't know what it is."

"What does it look like, Paul?"

"In the first place," Drake said, "you can easily follow her tracks. She took the lower bridle path. After the first quarter mile there's only one set of tracks going and coming. They were made when the ground was soft and they go down to a road and a gate that's locked. I didn't have a key but I could see where the horse's tracks went through the gate and down onto the road, so I tied up my horse and managed to squeeze through the fence."

"Any tracks around those trees, Paul?"

"An automobile had been parked there," Drake said. "There must have been two automobiles. That's the only way I can figure it out but I still can't figure the tracks right."

"How come?"

Drake took a small thin book from his pocket. "This is a little pocket book which gives the tread designs of all makes of tires. Now an automobile was in there that had some fairly new tires. One of the wheels was worn too much to identify but I identified the track of a right front wheel. Then the track of the other front wheel and the other rear wheel and . . . well, there I bogged down, Perry."

"What do you mean?"

"Of course, you have to understand it's a little difficult trying to get those tracks all fitted into the proper sequence. They . . ."

"What are you getting at?" Mason said.

"Hang it, Perry, I got *three* wheels."

"And the fourth was worn smooth?"

"Not that—what I mean is, Perry, I got three wheels *on a single side*."

Mason frowned at the detective. "*Three* wheels on a side?"

"Three wheels on a side," Paul Drake insisted doggedly.

Mason said rather excitedly, "Paul, did you notice a circular spot in the ground, perhaps eight or ten inches in diameter?"

"How the deuce did you know that spot was there?" Drake demanded, his face showing bewilderment.

Mason said, "It was made by the bottom part of a bucket, Paul. And the three tracks on each side were all right. That's the way it should be."

"I don't get it."

"A house trailer," Mason explained. "An automobile and a house trailer were parked under the trees. The waste water from a trailer sink is carried out through a drain to the outside. A bucket is placed there to catch the water as it runs off."

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"That's it, all right," Drake admitted.

Mason said, "It now begins to look as though Marcia Winnett kept an appointment on Monday with someone in a house trailer. And that seems to have been very much a turning point in her life."

Drake nodded. "On Monday—that's a cold trail, Perry."

"It's the only one we have," Mason pointed out.

Mason, studying the tire tracks, said, "It was an automobile and a house trailer, Paul. The round place which marks the location of the spout bucket can be taken as being approximately in the middle of the trailer. You can see over here the mark of an auxiliary wheel attached to the front of the trailer to carry part of the weight while the trailer was parked. That enables us to estimate the length of the trailer."

Drake said, "The trailer must have been backed in between these trees, Perry."

Mason started prowling along the edge of the fence. "Took some clever handling to get it in there. Let's look around for garbage. If the trailer remained here overnight, there are probably some tin cans, potato peelings, stuff of that sort."

Mason, Della Street, and Drake separated, covering the ground carefully.

Abruptly Della said, "Chief, don't look too suddenly, but casually take a peek at the big house on the hill. I think I saw someone moving in the glassed-in observation tower."

"I rather expected as much," Mason said, without even looking up. "However, it's something we can't help."

Drake exclaimed, "Here it is, Perry, some tin cans and garbage."

Mason moved over to where Drake was standing. Here the water from the winter rains, rushing down the ditch at the side of the road, had eddied around one of the roots of the big live oak and formed a cave which extended some three feet back under the roots of the tree.

Mason, squatting on his heels, used two dry sticks to rake out the articles.

There were three cans which had been flattened under pressure, some peelings from onions and potatoes, waxed paper which had been wrapped around a loaf of bread, an empty glass container bearing a syrup label, and a crumpled paper bag.

Mason carefully segregated the items with his sticks. As he did so, he kept up a running fire of conversation.

"That flattening of the cans is the trick of an old outdoor man," he said.

"Why flatten them?" Della inquired.

"Animals get their heads stuck in cans sometimes," Mason said. "Moreover, cans take up less room

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when they're flattened and require a smaller hole when they're buried. This little garbage pit tells quite a story. The occupant of the trailer must have been a man. Notice the canned beans, a can of chili con carne, potatoes, bread, onions—no tomato peelings, no lettuce leaves, no carrots, no fresh vegetables at all. A woman would have had a more balanced diet. These are the smallest cans obtainable and . . . hello, what's this?"

Mason had pulled apart the paper bag as he talked. Now he brought out a small oblong slip of paper on which figures had been stamped in purple ink.

Della Street said, "That's a cash register receipt from one of the cash-and-carry grocery stores."

Mason picked up the receipt. "And a very interesting one," he said. "The man bought fifteen dollars and ninety-four cents' worth of merchandise. There's a date on the back of the slip and this other figure refers to the time. The groceries were bought at five minutes past eight on Saturday morning. It begins to look, Paul, as though this is where you take over."

"What do you want me to do?" Drake asked.

Mason said, "Get a room in the hotel at Silver Strand Beach. Open up something of an office there. Get men on the job—lots of men. Have your men buy groceries. See if the printing on the slip from any cash register matches this. If it does, try and find out something about the single, sun-bronzed man who purchased fifteen dollars and ninety-four cents' worth of groceries at five minutes past eight on Saturday morning. A sale of that size to a man just a few minutes after the store opened might possibly have attracted attention."

"Okay," Drake said. "Anything else?"

"Lots else," Mason said. "Della, where's the copy you made of the numbers you found in the observation tower?"

Della ran to the glove compartment and brought back the slip of paper.

Drake looked at it, said, "What is it, Perry?"

"Stuff Della found in the observation tower. What do you make of it?"

"Some sort of dimensions," Drake said. "Here's this number 8 inches and 5280 feet, 9 inches and half a mile, 10 inches and quarter of a mile. What's the idea, Perry, why should the inches run 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and . . . ?"

"Suppose they aren't inches?" Mason said. "Suppose they're ditto marks."

"Well, it could be."

"Then what?" Mason asked.

Drake said, "Then the numbers could have something to do with a lottery of some sort."

"Add them up," Mason said.

"The total is already here," Drake said, "49″37817."

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Mason handed him a pencil.

Della Street, leaning over Drake's shoulder, was the first to get it. "Chief," she exclaimed, "the total isn't correct."

"I knew it wasn't," Mason said. "I didn't know just how much it was off, however. Let's find out."

Della Street said, "The total is . . . Wait a minute, Paul, I'll get it . . . 45″33113, but the total that's *marked* there is 49″37817."

"Subtract them," Mason said. "What do you get?"

Della Street's skillful fingers guided the pencil as she hastily wrote down numbers, performed the subtraction. "4″4704," she said.

Mason nodded. "I think," he said, "when we get this case solved, we'll find the important figure is the one that *isn't* there. Bear that figure in mind, Paul. It may turn up later."

Perry Mason took the steep stairs to the observation tower two at a time.

There was no one in the cupola. The binoculars, however, had once more been swung so that they were pointing to the grove of trees where the trailer had been parked. Mason placed his eyes to the binoculars. The left eye showed a clear vision, the right was blurred.

Mason bent over to study the adjustment on the right lens, saw it was set once more at negative five, then he changed the focus on the binoculars.

As he did so, he heard motion behind him and straightened abruptly.

Mrs. Victoria Winnett was standing in the doorway. At her side was a slender brunette in riding clothes whose face showed startled surprise. Mrs. Winnett's face showed no expression whatever.

"I hardly expected to find *you* here," Mrs. Winnett said to Mason, and then turning to the young woman at her side said, "Miss Rexford, permit me to present Mr. Perry Mason, the lawyer."

Daphne Rexford favored Mason with a smile which went only as far as her lips. Her eyes showed an emotion which might have been merely nervousness, might have been panic.

Mason acknowledged the introduction, then said, "I'm fascinated with the view you get from here, Mrs. Winnett."

"My late husband spent much of his time here. The place does hold something of a fascination. Daphne loves it."

"You're here frequently?" Mason asked Daphne Rexford.

"Yes, I study birds."

"I see."

"But," she went on hastily, "since you're here, I'll postpone my bird study until some other time."

"On the contrary," Mason said, "I was just leaving. I wanted to get the lay of the land."

"He's working with Claude on a mining deal," Mrs. Winnett has-

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tened to explain to Daphne Rexford. "There's a mining engineer with him. And Mr. Mason has his secretary. You'll meet them if you're over for dinner tonight."

"Oh, thank you, but I . . . I don't think I can make it for dinner tonight. If Claude's going to be busy . . . Where's Marcia?"

"Visiting friends," Mrs. Winnett said dryly. "*Please* come."

"Well, I . . . I should . . ."

Mason said as she hesitated, "Well, I must go down and hunt up my client. After all, I must earn my fee, you know."

"I feel quite sure you will," Mrs. Winnett said with a certain subtle significance. "Come, Daphne, dear. Draw up a chair. What was it you were saying about swallows?"

Daphne said hurriedly, "Oh, there's a meadow lark! I think there must be a nest down by that bush."

Mason quietly closed the door, walked down the stairs . . .

Major Winnett was in the drawing room. He looked up as Mason crossed toward the patio. "What luck?" he asked.

"Progress," Mason said.

Major Winnett's lips tightened. "Can't you do better than that? Or are you just running around in circles?"

"A good hound always runs around in circles to pick up a scent."

"Then you haven't anything definite yet?"

"I didn't say that."

"You intimated it."

Mason slid his right hand down into his trousers pocket, abruptly withdrew the diamond and emerald brooch he had taken from the swallow's nest.

"Seen this before?" he asked, extending his hand.

Major Winnett stiffened for a moment to rigid immobility. "It looks . . . Mr. Mason, that certainly is similar to a brooch my wife had."

"One that was stolen?"

"I believe so, yes."

"Thank you," Mason said and slipped the brooch back into his pocket.

"May I ask where you got that?" Claude Winnett asked excitedly.

"Not yet," Mason told him.

The telephone rang sharply. Major Winnett moved over to the library extension, picked up the receiver, said, "Hello," then turned to Mason. "It's for you."

Mason took the telephone. Drake's voice said, "We've got something, Perry."

"What?"

"That oblong slip of paper from the cash register. We've located the store. The girl who was on duty remembers our party. We've got a good description now. With that to go on, we had no trouble picking up his trail in a trailer camp. He registered under the name of Harry Drummond."

"There now?" Mason asked.

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"Not now. He pulled out early yesterday morning. I've got men covering every trailer camp anywhere near here. We should pick him up soon. We have the license number and everything. And here's a funny one, Perry. There's a jane looking for him."

"You mean . . . ?"

"No, not the one we're interested in, another one. She's brunette, snaky, young and tall, and she was asking the cashier about him earlier in the day. Had a good description. Wanted to know if such a man had been in."

"Are you located there in the hotel?"

"Yes. I've fixed up an office here and have half a dozen men out on the job, with more coming in all the time."

Mason said, "I'll be right up."

"Okay, be looking for you."

Mason heard the click at the other end of the line but did not immediately hang up. He stood holding the receiver, frowning at the carpet.

Abruptly he heard another sharp click and the telephone bell in the library extension gave a little tinkle.

Mason dropped the receiver into place, turned to Major Winnett. "I take it," he said, "you have several extensions on the phone?"

"Four," Major Winnett said. "No, there's five. There's one up in the observation tower. I almost forgot about that."

"Thank you," Mason said, and then added after a moment, "so did I."

Paul Drake was talking on the phone when Mason entered the suite of rooms Drake was using for headquarters. In an adjoining room Della Street, a list of numbers at her elbow, was putting through a steady succession of calls.

"Come in, Perry," Drake said, hanging up the receiver. "I was trying to get you. We're getting results fast."

"Shoot."

"Our party is a man thirty-eight years old, bronzed, wears cowboy boots, a five-gallon hat, leather jacket, Pendleton trousers, rather chunky, and has a wide, firm mouth. The license number of his automobile is 4E4705. He's driving a Buick automobile and has quite an elaborate house trailer painted green on the outside with aluminum paint on the roof. Up until Saturday morning he was in the Strand Trailer Camp. He left Saturday, showed up again late Monday night, pulled out again Wednesday morning, and hasn't been seen since."

"How did you get it?" Mason asked.

"Just a lot of leg work."

"What are you doing now?"

"I've got operatives scattered around with automobiles covering every trailer camp, every possible parking place for a house trailer anywhere in this part of the coun-

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try. We're working in a constantly widening circle and should turn up something soon."

Mason took out his notebook. "The number is 4E4705?"

"That's right."

"Then our mysterious observer in the observation tower made a mistake in addition. Remember, we were looking for a number 4"4704. The first number must have been 4E4705 and ditto marks were beneath the E. The real total then should have been . . ."

He was interrupted by a quick staccato knock on the door.

Mason exchanged glances with Drake. The detective left the desk, crossed over, and opened the door.

The woman who stood on the threshold was twenty-seven or twenty-eight, a tall brunette with flashing black eyes, high cheekbones, and an active, slender figure. A red brimless hat perched well back on her head emphasized the glossy darkness of her hair and harmonized with the red of her carefully made-up lips.

She smiled at Paul Drake, a stage smile which showed even, white teeth. "Are *you* Mr. Drake?" she asked, looking from him to Mason.

Drake nodded.

"May I come in?"

Drake wordlessly stood to one side.

His visitor entered the room, nodded to Perry Mason, and said, "I'm *Mrs.* Drummond."

Drake started to glance at Mason, then caught himself in time, and managed to put only casual interest in his voice. "I'm Mr. Drake," he said, "and this is Mr. Mason. Is there something in particular, Mrs. Drummond?"

"You're looking for my husband."

Drake merely raised his eyebrows.

"At the Strand Trailer Camp," she went on nervously. "And *I'm* looking for him *too*. I wonder if we can't sort of pool information?"

Mason interposed suavely. "*Your* husband, and you're looking for him, Mrs. Drummond?"

"Yes," she said, her large dark eyes appraising the lawyer.

"How long since you've seen him?" Mason asked.

"Two months."

"Perhaps if you want us to *pool* information, you'd better tell us a little more about the circumstances and how you happened to know we were looking for him."

She said, "I'd been at the Silver Strand Trailer Camp earlier in the day. The man promised me that he'd let me know if my husband returned. When your detectives appeared and started asking questions, he took the license number of their car, found out it belonged to the Drake Detective Agency, and . . ." She laughed nervously and said, "And that is where I started to do a little detective work on my own. Are you looking for him for the same reason I am?"

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Mason smiled gravely. "That brings up the question of why you're looking for him."

She gave an indignant toss of her head. "After all, I have nothing to conceal. We were married a little over a year ago. It didn't click. Harry is an outdoor man. He's always chasing around on the trail of some mining deal or some cattle ranch. I don't like that sort of life and . . . well, about two months ago we separated. I sued for divorce."

"Have you got it yet?"

"Not yet. We had an understanding about a property settlement. When my lawyer sent my husband the papers, he sent them back with an insulting note and said he wouldn't pay me a red cent and that if I tried to get tough about it, he'd show that I didn't have any rights whatever."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"And you want to find out just what he means by that?" Mason asked.

"That's right. And now suppose you tell me what *you* want him for. Has he done something?"

"Is he the type that would?" Mason asked.

"He's been in trouble before."

"What sort of trouble?"

"A mining swindle."

Drake glanced inquiringly at Mason.

"Where are you located?" Mason asked Mrs. Drummond.

"I'm right here at the hotel. And don't think they're the ones who told me about Mr. Drake's being here," she added hastily. "I found that out by . . . in another way."

"You spoke of *pooling* information," Mason said suggestively.

She laughed and said, "Well, what I meant was if you find him, will you let me know? And if I find him, I could let you know. After all, he shouldn't be difficult to locate with that trailer, but I want to catch him before he can get out of the state. If I can find out where he is, I have—some papers to serve."

"You have a car?" Mason asked.

She nodded, then added, "That is one thing I salvaged out of our marriage. I made him buy me a car, and that's one of the reasons I want to see him. The car's still in his name. He agreed to let me have it as part of the property settlement, but in his letter to my lawyer he said he could even take the car away from me if I tried to make trouble. Do either of you gentlemen have any idea what he meant by that?"

Mason shook his head and so did Drake.

"Perhaps," Mason suggested, "we might work out something. You see, even if your assumption is correct that we are looking for your husband, we would be representing some client and would naturally have to discuss things with that client."

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"Is it because of something he's done?" she asked apprehensively. "Is he in more trouble? Will it mean all his money will go for lawyers again, just like it did before?"

"I'm sure I couldn't tell you," Mason said.

"That means you won't. Look, I'm in Room 613. Why don't you ask your *client* to come and see me?"

"Will you be there all evening?" Drake asked.

"Well . . ." She hesitated. "I'll be in and out. I'll . . . I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll keep in touch with the hotel and if there are any messages, I'll be where I can come right back."

She flashed them a smile, moved toward the door with quick grace, then almost as an afterthought, turned and gave them her hand, glancing curiously through the open door of the adjoining room to where Della Street was seated at the telephone. Then she gave Mason another smile as the lawyer held the door open for her, and left the room, walking with quick nervous steps.

Mason closed the door, cocked a quizzical eyebrow at Paul Drake.

"The guy's wise," Drake said. "That means we haven't much time, Perry."

"You think he was watching his back trail?"

Drake nodded. "She's an alert little moll who knows her way around. This man Drummond has done something that he's trying to cover up. He left her to watch. She hypnotized the man who runs the trailer camp and then when my man showed up in an agency car . . ."

"But how about her asking questions at the cash-and-carry, Paul?"

Drake snapped his fingers. "Shucks, there's nothing to *that*. That's the way she builds up a background for herself. After all, she . . ."

The telephone interrupted. Drake picked up the receiver, said, "Drake talking . . . Okay, let's have it . . . When? . . . Where? . . . Okay, stay on the job . . . We'll be right down."

Drake hung up the receiver, said, "Well, that's it. We've got him located."

"Where?"

"Little down-at-the-heel trailer camp in a eucalyptus grove about three miles from here. Not much of a place—auto court cabins in front and trailer space in the rear. The conveniences aren't too good and it's patronized mostly by people who want to save two bits a day on the regular parking rate. The chief advantage is lots of elbow room. The grove consists of several acres and if a man wants to walk far enough to the bath and shower, he can pick his own parking place for the trailer."

"Any details?" Mason asked.

"One of my men just located it. The trailer came in yesterday night.

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The man who runs the place was busy selling gasoline at the time, and the driver of the car called out that he'd come back and register later. He tossed the man a silver dollar and the man told him to park any place he wanted to where he could find a plug for his electric connection."

Mason said, "Let's go. Della, you stay here and run the place. We'll telephone you in half an hour or so."

They drove down to the trailer camp in Mason's car. Drake's operative, lounging casually in the door of one of the auto cabins, gave the detective a surreptitious signal, and pointed toward the adjoining cabin.

Registering simply as "P. Drake," the detective rented the vacant cabin, then settled down with Perry Mason. A few moments later, Drake's operative came across to join them.

"Ever met Pete Brady?" Drake asked Mason.

Mason shook hands, said, "I've seen him once or twice before around your office."

"Glad to know you," Brady said to Mason, and then to Drake, "I'm not certain but what the guy who runs the place is getting suspicious. I asked too many questions."

"What's the dope?"

"The trailer's out there attached to the car. So far, I haven't had a glimpse of the man who is in it, but it's the license number of the car we want—4E4705."

"Let's take a look around," Mason said.

"You'll have to take it easy," Brady warned.

"How about the gag of buying a trailer," Drake asked. "Have you used that?"

Brady shook his head.

"We'll try that," Drake said. "You can wait here for awhile. What's the guy's name who runs the place?"

"Elmo, Sidney Elmo."

"Did he see you come over here?"

"No. I waited until he was selling gas."

"Okay. Stick around. I'll go tell the bird that we heard one of the trailers here was for sale. He won't know anything about it. That gives us an opportunity to go sauntering around looking them over."

Five minutes later when Drake returned, Mason joined him and they walked slowly out past the line of somewhat dilapidated cabins into the eucalyptus grove. Late afternoon shadows made the place seem cold and gloomy. The ground was still moist from the rain and the drippings of the trees.

"There's the outfit," Drake said. "What do we do? Go right up and knock and ask him if it's for sale?"

Mason said, "Let's try one of the other trailers first. We can talk loud enough so our voices will carry over here."

"Good idea," Drake said.

"Take this one," Mason said.

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The two walked over to the small homemade trailer Mason had indicated. It was parked about a hundred feet from the green trailer. Electric lights showed a well-fleshed woman in her late forties cooking over the stove. On the outside, a man was taking advantage of the failing light to tinker with the bumper on the trailer. There was an Oklahoma license plate on the car.

"This the outfit that's for sale?" Mason asked.

The man looked up and a long thin mouth twisted into a smile. He said with a drawl, "I ain't saying yes, and I ain't saying no. You want to buy?"

"We're looking for a trailer that we heard was for sale here."

"What sort of a trailer?"

"We just heard it was a good one."

"That's the description of this job all right."

Drake interposed, "You're not the man who spoke to the manager of the Strand Trailer Park and said he wanted to sell, are you?"

"Nope. Fact is, I'm not particularly anxious to sell. But if you wanted to buy it, I'd be willing to listen."

"We're looking for a particular trailer that's for sale," Mason explained. "How about that green one over there? Know anything about it?"

"No. It just came in last night."

"Don't suppose you've talked with the people who own it?"

"I ain't seen 'em. They haven't been around all day."

Mason said, "That looks like it. Let's go over there, Paul."

"Take it easy," Mason said as they approached. "Ever use a house trailer, Paul?"

"No. Why?"

"The steady weight of the trailer has a tendency to wear out springs. So most trailers are equipped with an auxiliary wheel which can be screwed into position when the trailer is parked."

"There isn't any here," Drake said.

"That's just the point. Furthermore, no spout bucket has been put out under the spout. And to cap it all, the cord hasn't been connected with the electric outlet."

"What are you getting at, Perry?"

Mason knocked loudly on the trailer door. When there was no response, the lawyer tentatively tried the knob.

The door swung open.

There was still enough afternoon light to show the sprawled figure lying in stark silence on the floor. The dark pool eddying out from under the body showed little jagged streaks, but its ominous significance could not possibly be misjudged . . .

(*continued on page 144*)

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Beginning a new series of

SECRET SERVICE STORIES

It is a long time since we have offered you a series of secret service stories. Surprisingly, the secret service story is not as common as one would think. Many of the demi-detectives of fiction, created by such authors as E. Phillips Oppenheim, William Le Queux, Sax Rohmer, and Edgar Wallace, have flirted persistently with international intrigue—but from a realistic point of view they are strictly amateurs or dabblers. Occasionally one of the master manhunters of fiction has taken a fling at counterespionage—Sherlock Holmes, for example, in "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" and "His Last Bow"; but, as we once remarked, these are random shots in otherwise stately, if not affairs-of-stately, careers.

Now we bring you the first in Michael Gilbert's new series of secret service short stories in the modern tradition—in the tradition of W. Somerset Maugham's ASHENDEN *. . . Meet Mr. Calder and his deerhound Rasselas and his old friend Mr. Behrens—they are secret agents (including the dog) of the "old school," yet they are as contemporary as today's spy and counterspy and spy-catcher . . . and isn't it noteworthy that the British do this sort of thing so much better than the Americans?*

THE FUTURE OF THE SERVICE

by MICHAEL GILBERT

"THE YOUNG MAN OF TODAY," SAID Mr. Behrens, "is physically stronger and fitter than his father. He can run a mile faster—"

"A useful accomplishment," agreed Mr. Calder.

"He can throw a weight farther, can jump higher, and will probably live longer."

"But not as long as the young lady of today," said Mr. Calder. "*They* have a look of awful vitality."

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Behrens—he and Mr. Calder, being very old friends, did not so much answer as override each other, and frequently they both spoke at once—"nevertheless, he is, in one important way, inferior to the older

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generation. He is mentally softer—"

"Morally, too."

"The two things go together. He has the weaknesses which go with his strength. He is tolerant—but he is flabby. He is intelligent—but he is timid. He is made out of cast iron, not steel."

"Stop generalizing," said Mr. Calder. "What's worrying you?"

"The future of our service," said Mr. Behrens.

Mr. Calder considered the matter, at the same time softly scratching the head of his deerhound, Rasselas, who lay on the carpet beside his chair.

Mr. Behrens, who lived down in the valley, had walked up—as he did regularly on Tuesday afternoons—to take tea with Mr. Calder in his cottage on the hilltop.

"You're not often right," said Mr. Calder at last.

"Thank you."

"But you could be on this occasion. I saw Fortescue yesterday."

"Yes," said Mr. Behrens. "He told me you had been to see him. I meant to ask you about that. What did he want?"

"There's a woman. She has to be killed."

Rasselas flicked his right ear at an intrusive fly; then, when this proved ineffective, he growled softly and shook his head.

"Anyone I know?" said Mr. Behrens.

"I'm not sure. Her name, at the moment, is Lipper—Maria Lipper. She lives in Woking, and is known there as Mrs. Lipper, although I don't think she has ever been married. She has worked as a typist and filing clerk at the Air Ministry since—oh, since well before the last war."

Both Mr. Behrens and Mr. Calder spoke of the "last war" in terms of very slight derogation. It had not been *their* war.

"And how long has she been working for them?"

"Certainly for ten years, possibly more. Security got onto her in the end by selective coding, and that, as you know, is a very slow process."

"And not one which a jury would understand or accept."

"Oh, certainly not," said Mr. Calder. "Certainly not. There could be no question here of judicial process. Maria is a season ticket holder, not a commuter."

By this Mr. Calder meant that Maria Lipper was a secret agent who collected, piecemeal, all information which came her way, and passed it on at long intervals—of months, or even of years. No messenger came to her. When she had sufficient to interest her masters, she would take it to a collecting point and leave it. Occasional sums of money would come to her through the mail.

"It is a thousand pities," added Mr. Calder, "that they did not get onto her a little sooner—before operation Prometheus Unbound came off the drawing board."

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"Do you think she knows about *that*?"

"I'm afraid so," said Mr. Calder. "I wasn't directly concerned. Buchanan was in charge. But it was her section that did the Prometheus typing, and when he found out that she had asked for an urgent contact, I think—I really think—he was justified in getting worried."

"What is he going to do about it?"

"The contact has been short-circuited. I am taking his place. Two days from now Mrs. Lipper is driving down to Portsmouth for a short holiday. She plans to leave Woking very early—she likes clear roads to drive on—and she will be crossing Salisbury Plain at six o'clock. Outside Upavon she turns off the main road. The meeting place is a barn at the top of the track. She has stipulated a payment of five hundred pounds in one-pound notes. Incidentally, she has never before been paid more than fifty."

"You must be right," said Mr. Behrens. "I imagine that I am to cover you here. Fortunately, my aunt is taking the waters at Harrogate."

"If you would."

"The usual arrangements."

"The key will be on the ledge over the woodshed door."

"You'd better warn Rasselas to expect me. Last time he got it into his head that I was a burglar."

The great hound looked up at the mention of his name and grinned, showing his long white incisors.

"You needn't worry about Rasselas," said Mr. Calder. "I'll take him with me. He enjoys an expedition now and then. All the same, it is a sad commentary on the younger generation that a man of my age has to be sent out on an assignment like this."

"Exactly what I was saying. Where did you put the backgammon board?"

Mr. Calder left his cottage at dusk the following evening. He drove off in the direction of Gravesend, crossed the river by the ferry, and made a circle round London, recrossing the Thames at Reading. He drove his inconspicuous car easily and efficiently. Rasselas lay across the back seat, between a sleeping bag and a portmanteau. He was used to road travel, and slept most of the way.

At midnight the car rolled down the broad High Street of Marlborough and out onto the Pewsey Road. A soft golden moon made a mockery of its headlights.

A mile from Upavon, Mr. Calder pulled up at the side of the road and studied the 1/25000 range map with which he had been supplied. The track leading to the barn was clearly shown. But he had marked a different and roundabout way by which the rendezvous could be approached. This involved taking the next road to the right, following it for a quarter of a mile, then finding a field track—it was no more

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than a dotted line even on his large-scale map—which would take him up a small re-entrant. The track appeared to stop just short of the circular contour which marked the top of the down. Across it, as Mr. Calder had seen when he examined the map, ran, in straggling Gothic lettering, the words Slay Down.

The entrance to the track had been shut off by a gate, and was indistinguishable from the entrance to a field. The gate was padlocked too, but Mr. Calder dealt with this by lifting it off its hinges. It was a heavy gate, but he shifted it with little apparent effort. There were surprising reserves of strength in his barrel-shaped body, thick arms, and plump hands.

After a month of fine weather the track, though rutted, was rock-hard. Mr. Calder ran up it until the banks on either side had leveled out and he guessed that he was approaching the top of the rise. There he backed his car into a thicket. For the last part of the journey he had been traveling without side lights. Now he switched off the engine, opened the car door, and sat listening.

At first the silence seemed complete. Then, as the singing of the engine died in his ears, the sounds of the night reasserted themselves. A night jar screamed; an owl hooted. The creatures of the dark, momentarily frozen by the arrival among them of this great palpitating steel-and-glass animal, started to move again. A mile across the valley, where farms stood and people lived, a dog barked.

Mr. Calder took his sleeping bag out of the back of the car and unrolled it. He took off his coat and shoes, loosened his tie, and wriggled down into the bag. Rasselas lay down too, his nose a few inches from Mr. Calder's head.

In five minutes the man was asleep. When he woke he knew what had roused him. Rasselas had growled, very softly, a little rumbling, grumbling noise which meant that something had disturbed him. It was not the growl of imminent danger; it was a tentative alert.

Mr. Calder raised his head. During the time he had been asleep the wind had risen a little and was now blowing up dark clouds and sending them scudding across the face of the moon; the shadows on the bare down were horsemen—warriors with horned helmets—riding horses with flying manes and tails. Rasselas was following them with his eyes, head cocked. It was as if, behind the piping of the wind, the dog could hear, pitched too high for human ears, the shrill note of a trumpet.

"They're ghosts," said Mr. Calder calmly. "They won't hurt us." He lay down and was soon fast asleep again.

It was five o'clock and light was coming back into the sky when he woke. It took him five minutes to

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dress himself and roll up his sleeping bag. His movements seemed unhurried, but he lost no time.

From the back of the car he took out a Groener .25 bore rifle, and clipped on a telescopic sight, which he took from a leather case. A handful of nickel-capped ammunition went into his jacket pocket. Tucking the rifle under his arm, he walked cautiously toward the brow of the hill. From the brow, a long thin line of trees, based in scrub, led down to the barn, whose red-brown roof could now be seen just over the slope of the hill.

Mr. Calder thought that the arrangement was excellent. "Made to measure," was the expression he used. The scrub was thickest round the end tree of the windbreak, and here he propped up the rifle, and then walked the remaining distance to the wall of the barn. He noted that the distance was exactly thirty-three yards.

In front of the barn the path, coming up from the main road, opened out into a flat space—originally a cattle yard, but now missing one wall.

"She'll drive in here," thought Mr. Calder, "and she'll turn the car, ready to get away. They always do that. After a bit she'll get out of the car and she'll stand, watching for me to come up the road."

When he got level with the barn he saw something that was not marked on the map. It was another track, which came across the down, and had been made, quite recently, by army vehicles from the Gunnery School. A litter of ammunition boxes, empty cigarette cartons, and a rusty beer can suggested that the army had taken over the barn as a staging point for their maneuvers. It was an additional fact. Something to be noted. Mr. Calder didn't think that it affected his plans. A civilian car, coming from the road, would be most unlikely to take this track, a rough affair, seamed with the marks of Bren carriers and light tanks.

Mr. Calder returned to the end of the trees and spent some minutes piling a few large stones and a log into a small breastwork. He picked up the rifle and set the sights carefully to thirty-five yards. Then he sat down, with his back to the tree, and lit a cigarette. Rasselas lay down beside him.

Mrs. Lipper arrived at ten to six.

She drove up the track from the road, and Mr. Calder was interested to see that she behaved almost exactly as he had predicted. She drove her car into the yard, switched off the engine, and sat for a few minutes. Then she opened the car door and got out.

Mr. Calder snuggled down behind the barrier, moved his rifle forward a little, and centered the sight on Mrs. Lipper's left breast.

It was at this moment that he heard the truck coming. It was, he thought, a fifteen-hundred-weight truck, and it was coming quite

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slowly along the rough track toward the barn.

Mr. Calder laid down the rifle and rose to his knees. The truck engine had stopped. From his position of vantage he could see, although Mrs. Lipper could not, a figure in battledress getting out of the truck. It was, he thought, an officer. He was carrying a light rifle, and it was clear that he was after rabbits. Indeed, as Mr. Calder watched, the young man raised his rifle, then lowered it again.

Mr. Calder was interested, even in the middle of his extreme irritation, to see that the officer had aimed at a thicket almost directly in line with the barn.

Three minutes passed in silence. Mrs. Lipper looked twice at her watch. Mr. Calder lay down again in a firing position. He had decided to wait. It was a close decision, but he was used to making close decisions, and he felt certain that this one was right.

The hidden rifle spoke; and Mr. Calder squeezed the trigger of his own. So rapid was his reaction that it sounded like a shot and an echo. In front of his eyes Mrs. Lipper folded onto the ground. She did not fall. It was quite a different movement. It was as though a puppet-master, who had previously held the strings taut, had let them drop and a puppet had tumbled to the ground, arms, legs, and head disjointed.

A moment later the hidden rifle spoke again. Mr. Calder smiled to himself. The timing, he thought, had been perfect. He was quietly packing away the telescopic sight, dismantling the small redoubt he had created, and obliterating all signs of his presence. Five minutes later he was back in his car. He had left it facing outward and downhill, and all he had to do was take off the handbrake and start rolling down the track. This was the trickiest moment in the whole operation. It took three minutes to lift the gate, drive the car through, and replace the gate. During the whole of that time no one appeared on the road in either direction.

"And that," said Mr. Calder, three days later to Mr. Fortescue, "was that." Mr. Fortescue, a square, sagacious-looking man, was manager of the Westminster branch of the London & Home Counties Bank. No one seeing Mr. Fortescue would have mistaken him for anything but a bank manager—although, in fact, he had certain other, quite important functions.

"I was sorry, in a way, to saddle the boy with it, but I hadn't any choice."

"He took your shot as the echo of his?"

"Apparently. Anyway, he went on shooting."

"You contemplated that he would find the body—either then or later."

"Certainly."

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"And would assume that he had been responsible—accidentally, of course."

"I think that he should receive a good deal of sympathy. He had a perfect right to shoot rabbits—the area belongs to the School of Artillery. The woman was trespassing on War Department Property. Indeed, the police will be in some difficulty concluding why she was there at all."

"I expect they would have been," said Mr. Fortescue, "if her body had ever been discovered."

Mr. Calder looked at him.

"You mean," he said at last, "that no one has been near the barn in the last four days?"

"On the contrary. One of the Troops of the Seventeenth Field Regiment, to which your intrusive Subaltern belongs, visited the barn only two days later. It was their gun position. The barn itself was the troop command post."

"Either," said Mr. Calder, "they were very unobservant soldiers, or one is driven to the conclusion that the body had been moved."

"I was able," said Mr. Fortescue, "through my influence with the army, to attend the firing as an additional umpire, in uniform. I had plenty of time on my hands and was able to make a thorough search of the area."

"I see," said Mr. Calder. "Yes. It opens up an interesting field of speculation, doesn't it?"

"Very interesting," said Mr. Fortescue. "In—er—one or two different directions."

"Have you discovered the name of the officer who was out shooting?"

"He is a National Service boy—a Lieutenant Blaikie. He is in temporary command of C Troop of A Battery—it would normally be a Captain, but they are short of officers. His Colonel thinks very highly of him. He says that he is a boy of great initiative."

"There I agree," said Mr. Calder. "I wonder if the army could find *me* a suit of battledress."

"I see you as a Major," said Mr. Fortescue. "With a 1918 Victory Medal and a 1939 defense medal."

"The Africa Star," said Mr. Calder firmly.

One week later Mr. Calder, wearing a Service Dress hat half a size too large for him and a battledress blouse which met with some difficulty round the waist, was walking up the path which led to the barn. It was ten o'clock, dusk had just fallen, and around the farm there was a scene of considerable activity as F Troop, B Battery of the Seventeenth Field Regiment settled down for the night.

Four guns were in position, two in front of and two behind the barn. The gun teams were digging slit trenches. Two storm lanterns hung in the barn. A sentry on the path saluted Mr. Calder, who inquired where he would find the Troop Commander.

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"He's got his bivvy up there, sir," said the sentry.

Peering through the dusk Mr. Calder saw a truck parked on a flat space, beyond the barn, and enclosed by scattered bushes. Attached to the back of the truck, and forming an extension of it, was a sheet of canvas, pegged down as a tent.

Mr. Calder circled the site cautiously. It seemed to him to be just the right distance from the barn and to have the right amount of cover. It was the place he would have chosen himself.

He edged up to the opening of the tent and looked inside. A young subaltern was seated on his bedroll, examining a map. His webbing equipment was hanging on a hook on the back of the truck.

Mr. Calder stooped and entered. The young man frowned, drawing his thick eyebrows together; then he recognized Mr. Calder and smiled.

"You're one of our umpires, aren't you, sir," he said. "Come in."

"Thank you," said Mr. Calder. "May I squat on the bedroll?"

"I expect you've been round the gun position, sir. I was a bit uncertain about the A.A. defenses myself. I've put the sentry slap on top of Slay Down, but he's out of touch."

"I must confess," said Mr. Calder, "that I haven't examined your dispositions. It was something—well, something rather more personal that I wanted a little chat about."

"Yes, sir?"

"When you buried her—" Mr. Calder scraped the turf with his heel—"how deep did you put the body?"

There was silence in the tiny tent, which was lit by a single bulb from the dashboard of the truck. The two men might have been on a raft, alone, in the middle of the ocean.

The thing which occurred next did not surprise Mr. Calder. Lieutenant Blaikie's right hand made a very slight movement outward, checked, and fell to his side again.

"Four feet, into the chalk," he said quietly.

"How long did it take you?"

"Two hours."

"Quick work," said Mr. Calder. "It must have been a shock to you when a night exercise was ordered exactly on this spot, with special emphasis on the digging of slit trenches and gun-pits."

"It would have worried me more if I hadn't been in command of the exercise," said Lieutenant Blaikie. "I reckoned if I pitched my own tent exactly here, no one would dig a trench or a gun-pit inside it. By the way—who are you?"

Mr. Calder was particularly pleased to notice that Lieutenant Blaikie's voice was under firm control.

He told him who he was, and he made a proposal to him.

"He was due out of the army in

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a couple of months time," said Mr. Calder to Mr. Behrens, when the latter came up for a game of backgammon. "Fortescue saw him, and thought him very promising. I was very pleased with his behavior in the tent that night. When I sprung it on him, his first reaction was to reach for the revolver in his webbing holster. It was hanging on the back of his truck. He realized that he wouldn't be able to get it out in time, and decided to come clean. I think that showed decision and balance, don't you?"

"Decision and balance are *most* important," agreed Mr. Behrens. "Your throw."

Coming soon . . . another secret service adventure, this one featuring Mr. Behrens—"It is not a problem which would appeal to Mr. Calder." Watch for it—Michael Gilbert's "The Catalytic Agent."

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Lieutenant Clancy stayed around all hours—it was one of the reasons the men of the 52nd Precinct worked so hard for him. And more than one criminal wished that Clancy "should have stood in bed" . . .

THE CASE BOOK OF THE 52nd PRECINCT

Clancy and the Cat's Eyes

by ROBERT L. PIKE

10:15 P.M. Lieutenant Clancy placed the assignment list on the Sergeant's desk and shrugged his way into his topcoat. "Some day," he said to nobody in particular, "I'll manage to get out of this place at a decent hour."

The Sergeant grinned. In the four months since Clancy had been transferred to the 52nd Precinct, he had made firm friends there, and the Sergeant knew that one of the reasons was the Lieutenant's readiness to work all hours.

"Well, Lieutenant," the Sergeant began lightly, and then paused as the telephone at his elbow began to buzz. His eyebrows lifted; it was on the call-box board, and even as he reached across for the receiver his eye automatically went to the list of patrolmen who might be at this particular call-box. Clancy paused, waiting.

The voice at the other end was reedy—high with nervousness.

"Hello? Hello? Is this thing working? Hello?"

"This is the 52nd Precinct. Reynolds, is that you?"

"Police station? Thank God! Hello? I've had an accident and I couldn't find a patrolman and I saw this box . . ."

Clancy waited stolidly. The words were only an unintelligible murmur to him but he could tell by watching the Sergeant's face that it was something unusual. He looked over the Sergeant's shoulder; the big hand was rapidly scribbling on a piece of paper: 89th between 11th and 12th.

"Slow down," the Sergeant commanded into the phone. "Talk slower. What was that again?"

". . . killed a man. He stepped right off the curb in front of my car. He's . . . he's dead, I think. Can you send someone?"

"Who's this? What's your name?"

"Does that matter? Oh, all right —my name's Linters. Can you get someone down here right away? My God . . . !"

"Stay right there." The Sergeant's voice was calm, attempting to ease the near-hysteria in the other's voice. "Right where you are, by the

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call-box. We'll have a man there in two minutes."

"It's on 89th between . . ."

"We know where it is." He hung up. "Some guy hit another guy with his car and thinks he killed him." His fingers were already dialing. "Hello? This is the 52nd. 89th between 11th and 12th. Man hit by a car. Yeah. Okay."

His fingers pressed another button; Clancy watched the familiar routine silently. Kaproski came in walking quickly. The Sergeant was scribbling rapidly on another piece of paper.

"Kap, a man got hit by a car over on 89th between 11th and 12th. The driver phoned from the call-box over there. The ambulance is on the way—get over there and see what's what. And bring in the driver."

Clancy moved forward. "I'll take you, Kap."

"You don't have to, Lieutenant," Kaproski said. "You've been here since early this morning. Stanton and me, we're on the swing. We can handle it."

"Want to," Clancy said shortly. "Curious."

They went outside and climbed into Clancy's car. He swung around the block and headed south on Ninth Avenue. Kaproski started to pat his pockets and then stopped, remembering he had quit smoking the day before. Clancy saw the gesture and grinned.

"Still not smoking?"

Kaproski grinned back. "Got a bet with Stanton. Who can hold out the longest."

"I like to see strength of character," Clancy said, and lit a cigarette. Kaproski's smile faded; he leaned back against the upholstery.

They pulled into 89th Street and crossed Tenth and Eleventh. The block ahead was dark, lined with shuttered and blank-faced warehouses; it seemed strange to think that only four blocks back Broadway was alive with lights and people. And ahead, a string of moving lights against the dark hills beyond the river marked the West Side Express Highway. 89th Street here was an island of shadow in the lighted bustle of the city.

Clancy automatically swerved to avoid a small oil slick that glimmered from the pavement, and drew up to the call-box. The man who had been sitting on the curb and leaning against the telephone pole jumped to his feet. In the lights cast by Clancy's headlights, a heavy black ancient Buick could be seen slewed in toward the curb. In the shadows ahead Clancy could see the bundle that was the body, the rigid feet extending into the faint circle of the Buick's parking lights. The ambulance obviously hadn't arrived yet.

"Police," Clancy said, pushing down on the door handle.

"Thank God! He stepped out in front of me and I didn't even see him . . ."

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Clancy swung the car door open; the man backed away and then caught the descending detective by the arm. He was trembling. "It wasn't my fault, I tell you! He just stepped off the curb in front . . ."

Clancy shook himself loose and walked over to kneel by the body. The man was dead without any doubt: the neck had the twisted look of being broken. The clothes were hunched about, tightened as if twisted on his body by a huge, vicious hand. A light line of blood was etched from the corner of his lips; it was drying into a sharp ridge across the chin.

"Kaproski! Bring a flashlight!"

The body stared up at them from the larger circle of light that washed the pavement; the man beside Clancy shrunk back.

"It wasn't my fault, I tell you!"

Clancy held the light firm. "Know him? Ever see him before?"

"Ever . . .? No, I don't know him. How should I know him? I was up at Martin's Bar on Broadway, and I was cutting over, coming down this street—"

"All right. Relax." Clancy got to his feet. "We'll have to take you in—you and your car. Let me see your identification."

"Certainly." The man fumbled in his jacket pocket. "Here they are. Driver's license, registration." He handed them over. Clancy glanced at them in the light of the flashlight, then slipped them into his pocket. "Kaproski, take him back in my car. I'll wait for the boys." He looked at the man. "Keys?"

"They're in the car."

The ambulance careened into the street at that moment, followed by a radio car, stark in black and white. The ambulance pulled up beside the three men and an attendant jumped out. Clancy nodded to him.

"Just a minute," he said and knelt again. "I want his pockets." He looked up at the driver of the death car, then to Kaproski. "Well?"

"Look, sir. I tell you it wasn't my fault."

"Nobody said it was, but the man's just as dead." He turned back to the corpse, searching the pockets. Kaproski led the man away. The ambulance attendants waited, looking bored. "Okay. He's yours." Clancy pushed himself back to his feet, stuffing papers into his pockets. He turned to the second man from the waiting radio-patrol car.

"You take the Buick back to the 52nd—put it in the garage. I'll go back with your partner."

He stood aside as the ambulance crew loaded the body onto a stretcher and slid it into the ambulance as if it were a drawer sliding back into a file cabinet. The patrolman from the radio car got into the Buick and turned the key. It coughed once, and caught and lumbered away from the curb.

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Clancy waited until the ambulance had left and then, stepping over another oil slick on the pavement, crawled into the radio car and slammed the door.

"Let's go," he said, sighing. The driver nodded and shoved the car into gear. Clancy watched the darkened warehouses go by, one by one; something was bothering him, scratching at his consciousness, but he didn't know what it was.

11:00 P.M. Clancy got out of the radio car, thanked the driver, and stumped up the steps of the precinct. Kaproski was standing at the Sergeant's desk as he swung through the door.

"Everything all right, Lieutenant?"

"Yeah. They took him away. Where's this Mr. Linters?"

"We didn't book him yet," the Sergeant said. "He wanted to call his lawyer, but Kap said you'd be right back, so we figured to wait. We let him blow into the bottle though. Zero." He tilted his head. "He's in your office."

Clancy nodded, yawned, and went down the hall to his office. The door was open and a patrolman was standing there. Mr. Linters was seated on a chair just inside, staring at his hands. As Clancy entered he jumped to his feet.

"Look, Lieutenant, what goes on? They won't even let me call my lawyer."

Clancy shed his coat and dropped wearily into his chair. He fished out the driver's documents and studied them silently. When he was through he looked up at the nervous face before him.

"Mr. Linters, you have every right to call your lawyer. If you want to call him, go ahead. But I'd suggest you let us put you up for the night and call him in the morning, because a judge has to set your bail, and no judge is going to be available at this hour."

Linters stared at him. "Bail? But, Lientenant, it was an accident! He stepped off the curb right in front of my car. It wasn't my fault—so why should I be held?"

"Because even if it was accidental, you killed a man," Clancy said flatly. "You took a man's life, and that's against the law. We could book you on a manslaughter charge right now, and if you want we will, and bail can be set in the morning. So you can call your lawyer, but you'll be held here tonight in any event." He shoved the phone across the desk; the man hesitated. Clancy pulled the phone back.

"Anybody else you'd like to call? Your wife? Or family?"

"Nobody," Linters said dully. "I have no family."

Clancy looked at him steadily. "Why don't you get some rest, Mr. Linters? Everything will work itself out in the morning." The other rose doubtfully and then without a word followed the patrolman out of the room.

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Clancy reached into his pocket, brought out the victim's papers, spreading them out on the desk. He was named Howard Willis; he had been the deck steward on the *Prince Charles,* a small passenger liner that plied between New York and Liverpool. He carried a British passport which showed many arrivals in the United States, the latest stamped that afternoon. Apparently heading for the bright lights when . . .

Clancy rubbed the back of his neck in weariness. The something that was bothering him seemed to hover on the edge of his consciousness; he chased it but it ran behind a blank section of his brain. He sighed, pushed the papers away, and leaned back. For some unknown reason the picture of a pair of shining cat's eyes passed before him. He shook his head, reached for the phone and dialed.

"Hello, Doc? This Clancy down at the 52nd. That accident victim they brought in from our neighborhood a while ago from 89th Street . . ."

"Yes, I know. They brought him in, but you swiped all his papers. We don't even have his name."

"It's Willis—Howard Willis. What I'm calling about, Doc— how does it look to you?"

"It looks like a man killed by a car. What's on your mind, Clancy?"

Clancy shook his head at the phone as if the other could see him. "I don't know. Nothing I guess. There wasn't anything queer about it?"

"Not a thing. We talked to your garage over there—everything in order. Why? Do you have an idea there's something fishy about it? Because I'd stake my reputation he was hit by that Buick and killed. Bumper caught him thigh-high and flung him. His neck snapped. I'v seen a hundred the same way."

Clancy thought. "He still had his shoes on . . ."

"They don't always lose their shoes, Clancy. Believe me, it's clean."

"Yeah. Well, okay, Doc. Thanks."

He hung up, still thinking. His eyes felt as if little grains of sand had been inserted under the lids; he shook his head to clear it. Then, for lack of anything else to do, he got up and walked down the corridor toward the exit leading to the garage. The precinct mascot, a tawny cat, slipped away from him as he opened the door to the garage. In the gloom of the corridor its eyes shone like molten agates.

"Cat's eyes," Clancy said, and started to step down to the garage level when he paused. Cat's eyes . . . that strange feeling of having missed something flooded him again. Cat's eyes . . . now why on earth would that tie up with the uneasy feeling that he had overlooked something?

Clancy stood frozen in the doorway of the garage, his mind tracing every action of the evening.

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Cat's eyes . . . but there had been no cat on the street, no cat involved. What was his brain trying to tell him?

And then it came to him, and his tiredness fled. He walked through to the garage and across the empty concrete floor. He walked quickly, alertly.

"Morrison," he called.

The uniformed attendant stuck his head out of the corner room that housed the tools. "Yes, Lieutenant?"

"That Buick there. Any damage done to it by hitting that man?"

Morrison came across the floor, wiping his hands on a piece of waste. "That Buick? A real old-timer, Lieutenant—you could hit an elephant with it. They really built them in those days. It ain't got a wrinkle."

"Radiator?"

"Not a scratch. Hell, Lieutenant, even the bumper's hardly dented where he hit the guy. You can see for yourself." He led the way over to the black car in the corner. "See?"

But Clancy didn't bother to look at the bumper. Instead, he bent down, peered under the chassis, and then arose, satisfied. "Morrison, I'm going to send Stanton down here and I want the two of you to go over this car with a fine-comb. I want you to really give it a shake. If there's one hairpin you miss, you'll hear about it."

"Sure, Lieutenant." The patrolman's voice was mystified. "But what are we looking for?"

"Anything," Clancy said, and trotted back to the front of the precinct.

"Kaproski and Stanton," he said to the Sergeant, and then paused. "This Linters. When you searched him, did you take his keys?"

"Sure." The Sergeant dug into his desk, bringing out an envelope. "Everything he had is in here." He pulled out some keys. "These?"

"I guess so," Clancy said, taking them. He patted his pockets to assure himself the driver's license was there with the address. "Anyway, we'll try them."

He went into his office, wide-eyed and moving fast. "Stanton, you go out to the garage and search that Buick with Morrison. And I *mean* search it. Take it apart. And don't ask me what you're looking for, because I don't know. Right?"

Stanton had had four months with Clancy; his eyes twinkled. "Sure," he said. "I wouldn't think of asking. But whatever it is, we'll find it, Lieutenant." He pushed his way out of the office.

Clancy turned to Kaproski. "You come with me. We've got a busy night ahead of us." He started to shove one arm into his topcoat, then paused and reached for the phone. "Sergeant, get me Central Street, the photographic lab." He had his coat on when the phone rang.

"Hello? Lieutenant Clancy here,

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at the 52nd. Look, we had a man killed by a car over on 89th Street, and what I need is photographs of the entire street—close-ups every five feet of pavement, from 11th to 12th. You'll have to use floods because I want the whole street photographed and it has to come out clear. And I want the pictures to include enough of the buildings to be able to piece them together and make a photo-strip all the way from 11th to 12th." He listened a while. "Sure. No, movies aren't necessary. Just stills, but they have to be clear." He listened some more. "That's fine. Soon as possible. Thanks."

He hung up and turned to Kaproski. "Let's go." They went out to the car. "You drive," Clancy said. "I'm bushed. Anyway, we're going to Martin's Bar on Broadway, and you're probably more up on bars around here than I am."

12:20 A.M. "Sure, Lieutenant," the bartender said. "If we can help, why, sure."

"He's a tall, skinny guy," Clancy said. "Name's Linters, if that means anything to you. My hunch is that he wasn't in here to drink at all, just to make somebody remember the time."

"Well, we were pretty busy," the bartender said. "You say it was around ten? The fights are on then, and it's a little hard to remember." He turned down the bar, calling the other bartender. "Hey, Charley. Come here a second, will you?"

Clancy repeated his story. Charley nodded sagely. "To remember the time, huh? So that was the gag, huh? Sure, I remember. That was the guy drank ginger ale, plain. Made a big deal out of it's being ten o'clock when he left. You see," he added, "we ain't got no clock in here. So this character says to me, 'What d'you know! Ten o'clock! Time sure flies! Got to get going.' Well, of course I couldn't care less, but if it's ten I gotta turn on the TV to the fights, but when I switched it on, it's only halfway through some gook about I Love Aunt Somebody or other. Ten o'clock!" Charley said in disgust.

"Thanks," Clancy said, and pulled Kaproski toward the door.

12:50 A.M. Nobody answered the prolonged ringing. Clancy slipped the key into the lock and swung the door wide. Kaproski peered over his shoulder as he switched on the lights, revealing the shabby coldness of the low-priced funished apartment. The room smelled musty, and the brown, cheap wallpaper was peeling from the walls in several places. Kaproski wrinkled his nose.

"Do we know what we're looking for here, Lieutenant?"

"This time we do," Clancy said. "We're looking for a passport. And if it's in a safe, we're out of luck, but I doubt if there's a safe in a

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dump like this. It wouldn't take too long tomorrow to check on it, but I'd like to finish this off tonight and fall into bed."

They separated. Clancy took the living room with the battered desk; Kaproski took the bedroom. It was Kaproski who found it. He came in, fingering the pages, studying the picture. "In the top drawer of the dresser," he said. "Why do you want this, Lieutenant?"

Clancy took it from him, riffling the pages, studying them. "That's it," he said with satisfaction. He turned a page. "Well, well! Entrance visa into Argentina, eh?" He closed the booklet, slipped it into his pocket, and looked around. "We'll do a real search later on. Right now I think we have all we need."

He walked over to the telephone and dialed the precinct. "Get me Stanton," he said. "He's out in the garage." He waited, towering over the small, marred end table that held the instrument. Kaproski leaned against the wall, mystified.

"Stanton? How you doing?"

There was frustration in the other's voice. "Nothing, Lieutenant. But nothing! Looks like it was cleaned just yesterday—not even a used kleenex. And we really went over it, too."

Clancy thought awhile, his mind picturing the street, the car, the darkness where the body had been flung. "Have you tried the gas tank?"

"The gas tank?"

Suddenly Clancy was sure—it added up, if it made sense. "That's right. Drain the gas tank. Take it apart if you have to. We'll be back in fifteen minutes." He hung up. Kaproski still stared at him wonderingly. "Well, let's get with it," Clancy said shortly. "The thing's winding up, and I want to get some sleep tonight."

1:25 A.M. "If I'd even have had an idea of what it was all about," Stanton said complainingly. "Who would have ever thought of the gas tank?"

"You were doing a search," Clancy reminded him. "It's a hiding place." He fingered the stones on the desk before him, then wrapped them in his handkerchief and thrust them into a drawer. "All right, let's get him in."

Linters shuffled in slowly, blinking in the light. Clancy indicated a chair in front of his desk, and the tall thin man dropped into it, glancing about nervously.

"Didn't wake you, did we?"

Linters shook his head. "I wasn't sleeping. It's a terrible thing on a man's conscience to kill a stranger—a total stranger—by accident."

Clancy nodded. "Yeah. It must be even worse to kill a friend—a good friend—on purpose."

The atmosphere in the room changed. Stanton and Kaproski stood back of the seated man; his eyes, swinging around, saw them

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bulking there. His face changed; the bewilderment disappeared and was replaced by an icy awareness. "I don't know what you mean."

Clancy looked at him evenly. "You don't? Let's take your movements again tonight. You left Martin's Bar and drove down 89th Street. Why? Where were you going?"

"Over to the West Side Express Highway. I didn't want to get in the traffic on 86th."

"I see. And you left Martin's Bar when?"

"At ten." No shade of expression moved the narrow face. "I remembered that it was exactly ten, because I looked at my watch. In fact, I may even have mentioned it to one of the bartenders."

"You did. But you happened to mention it at about 9:45. He turned on the TV to get the fights and found it was too early. Why did it take you a half hour to get over to 89th Street?"

Linters shrugged. "I must have stopped at another bar. I don't remember. I'd had a drink or two, you know."

"Ginger ale," Clancy said flatly. "The one thing you couldn't afford was to be picked up with alcohol in your blood after your so-called accident. The bottle you blew into proved that. Let's get on a bit. You say you never saw this Willis before?"

"Willis? Was that his name?"

"That was his name. And it's funny you never saw him before because he was the deck steward on a boat you took back from England less than two months ago." Clancy laid the passport on his desk. Linters eyed it disinterestedly.

"You don't meet all the stewards on a boat, you know."

"Not even when they are in a smuggling racket with you?"

Linters allowed himself a small smile. "Smuggling? What an imagination you have, Lieutenant! If I were smuggling with this—what was his name, Willis?—if I were smuggling with him, why on earth would I want to kill him?"

Clancy smiled back. "Because you were just a messenger boy, Linters. A Buick fifteen years old, a crumby apartment. You figured you'd hijack one big load and take off for South America before the boss got wise." He tapped the passport. "Argentina, to be specific."

Linters elaborately stifled a yawn. "You should write for the movies, Lieutenant."

Clancy didn't bother to answer. Instead he reached into his desk and dragged out the handkerchief, unfolding it. The sharp odor of gasoline came into the room.

Linters nearly fell out of his chair. "I want a lawyer," he shouted. "I'm not talking any more until I get a lawyer!"

"Sure," Clancy said. "And when you get one, and he asks what you're booked for, tell him it's mur-

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der in the first degree." He looked at the hunched figure before him. "Thought you were cute, eh? Well, we're pretty cute sometimes, too."

1:55 A.M. "I don't get it, Lieutenant," Kaproski said. "If he kills this Willis on purpose, why does he stick around? Why not blow?"

Clancy was twiddling a pencil. He looked up. "Kap, you ought to know the percentage of guys that get away with hit-and-run. Damn few. It's one of the things we never let go of. But a man who sticks around after an accident, and even calls the police—well, we're usually sympathetic. He may lose his license for a while, or even spend a few days in the can; but generally if it's an accident, and it isn't his fault, he walks out the same day. And he's clean."

"But how could you tell it wasn't an accident?" Stanton asked curiously.

"Cat's eyes," Clancy said, and smiled. "Oil slicks. They shine the same way. That Buick is a fine car for its age, but it has a leaky transmission. Leave it in one place for fifteen minutes and it leaves a nice pool underneath. I saw it when we first pulled into the street, and I saw it later when that radio cop took it away from in front of the call-box. It just didn't hit me at first—all I could think of was cat's eyes gleaming. Then, when I saw the precinct cat in the hallway, it suddenly struck."

He shrugged, twisting the pencil. "But it wasn't just that—that tied it up. Here's a guy mentions having been in a bar, and our bottle shows he didn't have anything to drink. Odd. Then he lets me talk him out of calling his lawyer. I wasn't trying to talk him out of it; I was checking on him. I've been in this racket a long time, and I never saw a man involved in an accident that failed to call for help even if it was four in the morning, let alone only midnight. But Linters was willing to let it ride. Odd."

He frowned, watching the pencil twist in his fingers. "And I'm also leery of all automobile accidents of this type anyway. An automobile is a weapon, and a legal one, and I've often wondered how many people who get killed by cars are really murdered. It's hard to prove."

He looked up. "But not this one. The photographs the lab takes will nail him. He parked up the street with his lights off. He had arranged the meet on 89th because it's a lonely place and ideal for a kill. Then he simply waited. When Willis came up from the docks, he switched on his brights, recognized him, and started up. Those old, big Buicks may take a second or two to get rolling, but when they do, they're hard to stop." He shrugged. "Take the package, drop it in the gas tank, call the cops, and wait. Very cute."

"But not cute enough, huh, Lieu-

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tenant?" Kaproski said, and then his grin faded. "But I still don't see how you figured it as smuggling in the first place."

"Well," Clancy said, "I knew that Linters had killed the man, and killed him purposely, not accidentally. There had to be a reason. Willis is a steward on a boat; Linters had been traveling lately. Smuggling was just a guess. Searching the car certainly seemed to be indicated, and we came up with the stones. That's all there was to it."

"Yeah," Stanton said. "But what if that old Buick didn't have a leaky transmission, what then, Lieutenant?"

"Then I'd have been home in bed hours ago," Clancy said. He got to his feet wearily and reached for his topcoat. "And there would be one more murderer walking the streets free and clear."

He pulled the coat on and stared out of the window—across the darkness of the city he loved and worked so hard to protect.

"There are plenty enough as it is." He sighed. "At least now there's one less . . ."

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Editors' Introduction

The first legitimate detective-story anthology did not appear until 1895. It was published in London under the title of *The Long Arm and Other Detective Stories* and contained only four tales, one each by Mary E. Wilkins [Freeman], George Ira Brett [Oswald Crawfurd], Roy Tellet, and Brander Matthews.

In the 45 years that followed, only 60-odd detective anthologies broke into print in England and America—considerably less than two anthologies per year on the average—and of these 60-odd works only a baker's half-dozen were truly distinguished collections from a purely critical or selective point of view. In order of their appearance, but not in order of their time-tested rank in the history of the detective anthology, this baker's half-dozen included: *Library of the World's Best Mystery and Detective Stories* (1907), 6 volumes, edited by Julian Hawthorne—a monumental work for its time and expanded two years later under the better known title of *The Lock and Key Library,* 10 volumes; *Crime and Detection* (1926), edited by E. M. Wrong; *The Great Detective Stories* (1927), edited by Willard Huntington Wright (S. S. Van Dine); *Fourteen Great Detective Stories* (1928), edited by Vincent Starrett; *Great Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* (1928), edited by Dorothy L. Sayers; *The World's Best One Hundred Detective Stories* (1929), 10 volumes, edited by Eugene Thwing; and Dorothy L. Sayers's smallest but finest anthology, *Tales of Detection* (1936).

In 1941 came your Editors' *101 Years' Entertainment,* commemorating the centennial anniversary of the detective story, and to quote Vincent Starrett on an entirely different matter, "And after [that], the deluge!" Despite the paper shortage of the boom war years, detective-story anthologies multiplied rabbitly. Hardly a month passed during the 1940's without the appearance in book stores and on newsstands of another omnium-gatherum of detective-crime short stories. Most of these compilations were, to quote the English critic, E. A. Osborne, "just higgledy-piggledy bouquets of dried flowers." Few of these anthologies had an "idea" behind them, a comprehensive or specialized theme that explored the more serious aspects of detective-story criticism, history, and technique.

Obviously it was easier for an editor in those lush publishing days to

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do a scissors-and-paste job (as distinguished from a "scissors-and-taste" job), leaning for the most part on familiar stories or merely culling the then current magazines, both slick and pulp, for enough stories to fill out an important-*looking* book. The pure-in-heart anthologist scorned (and still scorns) such line-of-least-resistance editing; the anthologist with a creative conscience devotes unstinted time and effort in long, arduous research to discover the "unknown" classics which have been ignored, forgotten, or neglected by those "editors" who do not realize that a critic can also be guilty of potboiling.

So, every now and then—all too infrequently in the mainstream of anthologies—when a collection appears that is the blood, sweat, and tearsheets of a 24-carat craftsman (a true aficionado like Vincent Starrett, Anthony Boucher, Howard Haycraft, James Sandoe, and Lee Wright), we are honor-bound and duty-bound to hail the event with all due fanfare and huzzahs. And such an anthology was scheduled for publication in 1947—sixteen years ago.

Scheduled to appear sixteen years ago—and not published yet.

The editor was John Dickson Carr—his first venture into the anthology field; the publisher was Crown; and the title of Mr. Carr's first anthology was *The Ten Best Detective Novels*. The book was planned to be a titanic 'tec tome—the first attempt to do for the detective *novel* what so many anthologists have tried to do for the detective *short story*. Here, in a single volume, were to be included the fruits of Mr. Carr's lifelong reading in the genre he himself has so magnificently aided and abetted; here was, indeed, a Brobdingnagian bedside "reader."

For this huge harvest of homicide Mr. Carr wrote a 16,000-word Introduction—which has been waiting these past sixteen years for publication. The first part of the Introduction dealt with the detective novel in general—technique, craftsmanship, style, and trends; the remainder of the Introduction dealt with the detective novel in particular—specific authors and specific books. This second part was an integral segment of Mr. Carr's mammoth murder anthology—it explained his choices; and it even gave his reasons for certain spectacular omissions. While this second part seems fated to die on the vine with the anthology itself, surely the first part—a "new master's" critique—should be made available to the public . . . which is exactly what we propose to do—rescue Mr. Carr's criminological credo from biblivion and give it to the widest possible audience of "the fancy."

Now, which detective novels did Mr. Carr select as *The Ten Best?* It would be a villainous trick to keep you in suspense any longer! So, here are Mr. Carr's choices—his all-time Big Ten (as of 1947):

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A. Conan Doyle's *The Valley of Fear*
Gaston Leroux's *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*
A. E. W. Mason's *At the Villa Rose*
Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*
Ellery Queen's *The Lamp of God*
Anthony Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*
S. S. Van Dine's *The Greene Murder Case*
Philip MacDonald's *Murder Gone Mad*
Rex Stout's *The League of Frightened Men*
Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors*

Surely you have been asking yourself: why *did* Mr. Carr's anthology die on the vine? Why did such a "natural" fail to see the light of print? The reason is simple—and shocking.

Three of the original publishers who control the reprint rights to three of Mr. Carr's *Ten Best Novels* refused to grant permission to Crown to include those three novels in Mr. Carr's anthology!

Why did three publishers refuse to participate? Frankly, we do not know. All we do know is that it was a colossal pity. Naturally, with 30% of Mr. Carr's entries in the Homicide Handicap "scratched," the race had to be postponed—and it has remained a phantom Detective Derby for sixteen years . . .

It should be noted that Mr. Carr makes the following point in that part of his Introduction which is not being offered in this issue of EQMM: "The anthology has been called *The Ten Best Detective Novels* —a title for whose arbitrariness you must blame the publisher. I myself should have preferred to call it *Ten* of the *Best,* assigning to my introduction a task less responsible than that of the recording angel."

Of course, Mr. Carr is right, but the publisher can hardly be censured for choosing the better selling title. True, the publisher definitely stuck his neck (and Mr. Carr's) out on a limb, to mix metaphors, and invited round-the-world debate and argument on the critical wisdom of Mr. Carr's selections; devotees and serious students of the genre, and equally important, those who read for sheer pleasure and entertainment, will disagree with this title or that, and discussion will rage round the hot-stove league of detection as to the unforgivable omission of this author or that. And the simple truth of the matter is that Mr. Carr *is* guilty of at least one unpardonable omission—and that omission cannot be passed over without some accusatory comment.

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Where, oh, where in Mr. Carr's anthology is a writer named John Dickson Carr, or his *alter ego,* Carter Dickson?

We understand Mr. Carr's uncomfortable position. It is similar to that which faced Tyrus Raymond Cobb after his retirement from baseball: nearly every year, it seemed, some famous sports writer would visit Cobb and ask the peerless Ty to name his all-star, all-time baseball team; and always the Georgia Peach would nominate Babe Ruth, Tris Speaker, and Shoeless Joe Jackson for his greatest of all outfields. But breathes there a fan with soul so dead that he would even hesitate in naming Ty Cobb to the immortal nine?

Yes, Mr. Carr is understandably guilty of false modesty; but if Ellery Queen were asked to choose the ten best modern detective novels, or the twenty best old and new masterpieces, you can bet all the deductions in Detectivania (or all the Rice in Craig, as Anthony Boucher once remarked) that one of those ten moderns or one of those twenty all-time greats would be a novel by John Dickson Carr or Carter Dickson.

But to get back to Mr. Carr's own anthology . . . We must finally admit, after sixteen years, that the Carr cause is lost. With infinitely higher production costs these days, and with no sign of change of heart on the part of the three reluctant publishers (dragons), John Dickson Carr's *The Ten Best Detective Novels* is doomed never to appear . . .

Surely Mr. Carr's work on his anthology should not be totally lost to the public. We cannot give you, of course, the texts of his selections; but we can give you the first part of his Introduction—a witty and often comic dissertation, a probing and perceptive analysis, a brilliant "mystique" by a serious and dedicated critic of what Mr. Carr so aptly calls "the old game, the great game, the grandest game in the world."

And if you interpret these Introductions (EQ's and JDC's) as heartfelt petitions for a return to the grand tradition, to the classic technique —as a joint appeal for a renaissance of ingenuity and surprise and wonder and imagination—in a phrase, as a double plea for a return to the golden age of the detective story—why, you're absolutely right!

ELLERY QUEEN

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THE GRANDEST GAME IN THE WORLD

by John Dickson Carr

"DO YOU SOLEMNLY SWEAR NEVER TO CONCEAL A VITAL CLUE FROM THE reader?"

"I do."

That is the first article in the oath taken by members of the Detection Club. The candidate, placing his hand upon Eric the Skull, swears this with fervency. He swears it with stern looks fixed on him. He swears it while Eric's eyes (thanks to John Rhode) glow with red electric lights. He swears it even before he promises to honour the King's English, use legitimate detective methods in his stories, and refrain from pinching his fellow-members' plots.

And this rule, the *sine qua non* of the profession, must be emphasized at the beginning to explain my choice of stories in *The Ten Best Detective Novels*.

For the once-humble detective novel has come a long way. It has gone up hill, down dale, over the plain and through the sewer. In fifty years it has undergone so many changes, not to say disguises, that sometimes we quite literally don't know what we are talking about. A new novel is praised because it is well written, because the characters are admirably drawn, because it is "tough," because it is experimental in technique, because it is written sideways or upside down: on any grounds, in short, except that it is a good detective story.

If the term means anything at all, it means this:

The detective story is a conflict between criminal and detective in which the criminal, by means of some ingenious device—alibi, novel murder-method, or what you like—remains unconvicted or even unsuspected until the detective reveals his identity by means of evidence which has also been conveyed to the reader.

That is the skeleton, the framework, the Christmas tree on which all the ornaments are hung. If the skeleton has been badly strung, or the tree clumsily set on its base, no amount of glittering ornament will save it. It falls over with a flop. Its fall may create a momentary sensation, especially among children; but adults are only depressed when they see the same sort of thing happen in fiction.

The author of the book hasn't bothered. He has decided that good construction is of no consequence, or that nobody cares anyway. Far from planning in advance every move, every speech, every detail, he has roared ahead on inspiration and trusted to luck. And his attitude is

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understandable if he is writing a straight thriller, where rapid-fire action swallows up everything. But it becomes merely bad craftsmanship if he thinks he is writing a detective story.

We might postulate, to begin with, that the detective novel at its best will contain three qualities seldom found in the thriller. It will contain the quality of fair play in presenting the clues. It will contain the quality of sound plot-construction. And it will contain the quality of ingenuity.

Ingenuity? Do we start an argument here?

It seems remarkable that this need for ingenuity in the *outstanding* detective novel has been so strangely overlooked. Perhaps the reason is that you cannot turn it into a "must"; you cannot lay it down as a rule of the game. You cannot say to an author, "Look here, sit down and be ingenious." Maybe he can't be. Maybe he doesn't want to be. His interests may lie along other lines, such as the hero slugging the police or (more pleasant to read about) the police slugging the hero.

But, though this quality of ingenuity is not necessary to the detective-story as such, you will never find the great masterpiece without it. Ingenuity lifts the thing up; it is triumphant; it blazes, like a diabolical lightning-flash, from beginning to end.

It is not of intrinsic interest to read that X has been stabbed to death in a hotel room, and that the police—after re-winding the clock, or studying the bloodstains, or any of the stock-tricks in vogue since the time of Gaboriau—have proved the guilt of Y the waiter. This is all very well; it may be competent work; it will serve to be read if we have nothing better at hand. But, in pitting our wits against the masters of the trade, we require something very different.

We require, for instance, the superb explanation of the clock-alibi, in A. E. W. Mason's *The House of the Arrow*. Or the means used to conceal the identity of the criminal, in Agatha Christie's *Murder in Mesopotamia*. Or the reason why the corpse wore its clothes the wrong way round, in Ellery Queen's *The Chinese Orange Mystery*. Or the ironic brilliance of Anthony Berkeley's *Trial and Error*, in which a man who has confessed to the murder tries to prove himself guilty and can't do it.

These writers (with others like them) are the aristocrats of the game, the old serpents, the gambit-devisers and trap-baiters whose strokes of ingenuity make the game worth playing at all.

For what, after all, is the game itself?

It is a hoodwinking contest, a duel between author and reader. "I dare you," says the reader, "to produce a solution which I can't antici-

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pate." "Right!" says the author, chuckling over the consciousness of some new and legitimate dirty-trick concealed up his sleeve. And then they are at it—pull-devil, pull-murderer—with the reader alert for every dropped clue, every betraying speech, every contradiction that may mean guilt.

Nothing, in fact, shows more clearly the difference between the expert craftsman and the novice than his manner of presenting this evidence. The novice, even when he is anxious to include a clue, develops a case of acute self-consciousness about it. He feels naked before the reader's eye. He is much too afraid of being caught with the goods. So he hurls the clue into the story and then runs like a maniac, as though he had thrown a bomb.

The result is that the clue, one or two words at most, will flash past and become lost among sixty or seventy thousand other words. This is painfully evident during the detective's summing-up in the final chapter.

"The whole question of Dagmar Doubledick's guilt," declares the detective, "turns on the kind of necktie he was wearing when we met him that day at Wemmerly Park. Of course you remember it was a green tie?"

To which the honest reader is compelled to answer: "No, I'm damned if I do!"

And then, if he is conscientious, he will turn back through the book to discover whether Dagmar Doubledick's tie really was green. Perhaps he finds this clue, a violet by a mossy stone, half hidden somewhere in the dusky recesses of Chapter Six; perhaps he misses the page and does not find it at all. In either case he is left with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction: as though he has been, if not swindled, at least out-talked.

Now it may be argued, and reasonably, that the author here was playing perfectly fair. He was not compelled to repeat it, or even stress it. Thus when the whole solution of Earl Derr Biggers' *Charlie Chan Carries On* is based on the single word "stuffy," or when Carolyn Wells in *The Luminous Face* argues guilt from the thesis that no gentleman would wear a wrist-watch with evening clothes, these novels are at least technically within the rules.

But the masterpiece of detection is not constructed from "a" clue, or "a" circumstance, or one single inconsistency of any kind. Such methods, dubious enough in a short story, become grotesque when they are applied to a full-length novel. It is too reminiscent of those minute-mysteries, vignettes accompanied by paralytic-looking photographs, with which we are so familiar in magazines.

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"You stated, Leonard Andreas," thunders the Inspector, "that you drank a scotch-and-soda in the bar-parlour of The Flaming Bishop at nine o'clock, whereas we know the pub ran out of spirits at half-past eight. It proves, Leonard Andreas, that you committed the murder."

Now this is a bit rough on poor old Leonard Andreas, because it doesn't prove anything of the kind. It proves only that the witness told a lie, or that the landlord (as usual) was keeping his whisky under the counter for favoured customers. We are dealing, here, with murder; and we can hardly let a man's life, even that of a character in fiction, depend on such flimsy evidence.

The fine detective story, be it repeated, does not consist of "a" clue. It is a ladder of clues, a pattern of evidence, joined together with such cunning that even the experienced reader may be deceived: until, in the blaze of the surprise-ending, he suddenly sees the whole design.

Your craftsman knows, as Dr. R. Austin Freeman long ago pointed out, that it is not at all necessary to mislead the reader. Merely state your evidence, and the reader will mislead himself. Therefore, the craftsman will do more than mention his clues: he will stress them, dangle them like a watch in front of a baby, and turn them over lovingly in his hands. He will give not only the clue physical, but the clue psychological and the clue atmospheric.

No speech in the book is included just because it sounds mysterious, or because it makes a given character look guilty, or because the author doesn't know what the devil his character does mean and simply throws in the words to fill up space. Not at all. In turning over the pages afterwards, the reader can see for himself—how rare it is!—just what each character was *thinking* at any moment.

And the result?

That is why the story pulses with vitality all the way through, and springs into living vividness at the end. The veil is twitched away; the masks are removed. Human beings walk here, and no sawdust dolls, because the author has described voice-inflections, shades of feeling, as well as Inspector Hogarth's discovery of the blunted thumb-tack under the sofa. He has not forgotten to study his characters merely because he is writing about them in reverse. That turn of the eyes—of course! That momentary hesitation, when Betty puts her hand on the window-ledge as though to steady herself—naturally!

Each small detail glitters now with an effectiveness it should have had, and would have had, if the story had been written straightforwardly. It is in the mood, in the tempo, an arrow whang in the gold. And when, in addition to this, we find ourselves flumdiddled by some

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master-stroke of ingenuity which has turned our suspicions legitimately in the wrong direction, we can only salute the author and close the book with a kind of admiring curse.

There, good friends, *is* a detective story.

But who writes such stories nowadays?

In considering this question, on a terrain where it is to be feared that bricks are apt to fly, we might do worse than examine the wide difference which has developed nowadays between the British and the American type of detective novel.

During the good (or bad) old days twenty-five years ago—let's speak first of the everyday mediocre practitioners rather than the great ones—these novels were of much the same kind. Both sides were content to write the English language, even when they wrote it badly. Both sides made some mumbling acquiescence in the matter of rules, even when they broke rules all over the place.

Their plots, too, were the same. Alter the locale from Long Island to Surrey, substitute "baronet" for "industrial magnate," and the stories were almost interchangeable. This change, in fact, was actually made when the thrillers about Frank L. Packard's Jimmie Dale were published in England, with the redoubtable Jimmie living in Park Lane and battling against an evil, conscienceless gang of robbers called (it is regrettable to state) the Crime Club.

But the pattern of the average detective story ran thus: The victim, on the eve of making a new will, was found murdered in his library. He had been stabbed with an Oriental dagger, customarily used as a paper-knife on his desk. The whole room was strewn with cuff-links, bus-tickets, lace handkerchiefs, and cigarette-ends, in the fine artistry of a paper-chase.

Inspector Brace, summoned hastily to the scene of the crime, found only the beginning of his troubles. The baronet or industrial magnate —in addition to his ne'er-do-well son, his rebellious daughter, and his invalid wife—was afflicted with such a household as nobody, even in the days of the servant shortage, would tolerate for five minutes. The butler was a blackmailer, the chauffeur an ex-convict, the housekeeper a religious maniac. If this were not enough, investigation discloses that no less than eight other suspects, at the time of the murder, were skulking in one long procession past the library windows.

"This situation," says Inspector Brace, "is hopeless!"

And it is difficult not to agree with him, since the various cuff-links and cigarette-ends are proved to have been dropped innocently by one

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or the other of the suspects, popping at intervals in and out of the windows like Box and Cox. Inspector Brace, desperate, is about to arrest the ne'er-do-well son when the latter's fiancée calls in that gifted gentleman, the private detective Reginald Du Kink.

Then we got real business. It is Du Kink who discovers that the established time of the murder is all wrong, due to an effect of ventriloquism or a phonograph-record of a voice, and at a dramatic gathering of suspects he fastens the guilt on the dead man's secretary. The secretary, haggard and foaming, waits only to scream out a confession before he drinks off the contents of a small vial and instantly falls dead.

And that was that.

Now the above, so help me, is not written in ridicule. It is not meant as burlesque. You and I, who have been improving our minds with sensational fiction for so many years, are much too fond of detective stories. We are aware that all the above plot-tricks were used long before 1920, have been used since, and are still in use today—often by the very best practitioners in the business.

Seldom are they lumped together in one story, as was formerly the case, nor is the clue so naive as a broken cuff-link. And the ghost of Dr. Freud haunts everything today. But the old elements remain. The millionaire's home, the threatened disinheritance, the rebellious family, the enigmatic servant, the multiplicity of suspects, the wrongly accused, the wrong time of death—how many novels can you name in which not one of these elements is to be found?

Why, then, do we protest at the adventures of Inspector Brace and Reginald Du Kink? Why do their frenzied activities hover always on the edge of comedy, not to say broad farce?

We don't find them funny because they are what our age likes to call "period-pieces." Far from it. One glance at a list of the detectives who were practising long before them, a list which includes short stories as well as novels, will convince us of that.

There is nothing in the least funny about the great stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Nobody smiles today at G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, though the stumpy little priest first appeared in 1911. The same applies to Inspector Hanaud, whom A. E. W. Mason introduced in *At the Villa Rose* a year earlier; and Dr. Freeman set the experienced John Thorndyke to solve his greatest problem, *The Eye of Osiris,* in the same year. E. C. Bentley, in 1913, was a comparative latecomer with his brilliant tour de force of *Trent's Last Case*. On the other side of the Atlantic, an underrated genius named Jacques Futrelle had created Professor Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen as early as 1907, whereas Mel-

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ville Davisson Post was already an old craftsman when he gave us the classic book of short stories about the far-from-comic Uncle Abner in 1918.

And here we begin to see the explanation of why, as early as the 1920's, the intelligent reader was getting fed up with the adventures of Inspector Brace and Reginald Du Kink.

"Oh!" said the reader. "I'm tired of just guessing who the criminal is. Instead of these sleight-of-hand half-clues, so that it's never properly explained at the end how the detective knew, let's have some real evidence.

"Furthermore," continued this reader, "it's all very well to have your eight suspects parading in their endless ring-around-the-rosebush outside the library. That's fine. But give some sensible reason why they were there. If you must shower the room with bus-tickets, provide a reason for that, too. In other words, construct your story. Your present problem is not to explain the villainy of the guilty: it's to explain the stupidity of the innocent.

"Finally, your 'amazing revelation' at the end was so soggy, so lacking in essential cleverness, that I couldn't care less. Haven't you a new idea tucked away somewhere? Can't you wield even a minor thunderbolt? It was far different, believe me, from that joyous shock when Father Brown unmasked the Invisible Man, or Uncle Abner showed the meaning of the Straw Man, or Sherlock Holmes, in an unforgettable moment, swept the disguise from the Man with the Twisted Lip."

Holà! Wow!

Please pardon these exclamations. It is only that I, who write this introduction, feel warm with pleasure merely to recall, and taste in memory, those great moments of fictional crime. Once more, in memory, we see the gaunt figure of Holmes with the bath-sponge in his hand, and shock-haired Hugh Boone writhing on the bunk. Or Father Brown, under a lurid sky in the waste of snow, with the giant hall-porter between whose very feet runs the straggle of tracks where no man has passed; and out across the snow rings that despairing cry:

"God! The invisible man!"

Such moments, then, aid us in summing up the reasons why an imaginative reader required somebody more enterprising than Inspector Brace or Reginald Du Kink. He required a skilful story told in reverse by a skilful story-teller. He required (need it be repeated?) the quality of fair play, the quality of sound construction, and the quality of ingenuity. And already, at the beginning of the 1920's, this decade saw new writers who possessed just such qualities.

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It saw the debut of Agatha Christie in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles,* based on the (then) startling novelty that the person first suspected turns out to be the murderer after all; he has wanted to get himself tried and acquitted so that he can't be tried again—a device later used by so many other writers. It saw Freeman Wills Crofts, with *The Cask* and its grisly contents, inaugurating the new fashion of the Unbreakable Alibi.

It saw John Rhode, in *The Paddington Mystery,* present a victim dead from no apparent cause—while telling us for the first time (and almost the last time) that Dr. Priestley's Christian name is Lancelot. It saw Anthony Berkeley's initial effort take the form of a "locked room" in *The Layton Court Mystery.* It saw Dorothy L. Sayers—with *Whose Body?*—setting an unfledged Lord Peter Wimsey to solve the puzzle of a strange corpse, clad only in a pair of pince-nez, found stabbed in a dry bath.

These 1920's, whatever may be said against them, thronged with sheer brains. What would be one of the best possible settings for violent death? J. J. Connington found the answer, with *Murder in the Maze.* Has anybody ever used the camera obscura, that eerie periscope-device, for witnessing sinister events at a distance? Mr. Connington again, with *The Eye in the Museum.* In the 1920's, too, Philip MacDonald made his notable advent with *The Rasp.* R. A. J. Walling, in *Murder at the Keyhole,* demonstrated how you can force a reader to look literally in the wrong direction. And always with us during those days, cherubic, dependable, and moaning like an animated cream-bun, was H. C. Bailey's Mr. Fortune.

Now look towards the other side of the Atlantic. It must be acknowledged that America, during the same period, produced only two detective-story writers of the first class.

Regarding those who were not first-class or anywhere near it, there is no need to mention names. Most of them were women, one or two of whom are still writing today. These ladies waltzed gracefully, waltzed well; but they waltzed always in the arms of Inspector Brace or Reginald Du Kink. We have pleasant memories of them all; theirs is the scent of arsenic and old lace. They call to mind coloured frontispieces from their own books: the yellow gowns sweeping the floor, the padded rooms cosy with crime.

But there is one name which must be mentioned, because it belongs to a man who came dangerously near being first-rate and who had more influence on his medium than anyone seems to have realized. That is the name of Arthur B. Reeve.

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Arthur B. Reeve, who began in an earlier era—as, indeed, did most of the lady-waltzers—entered the 20's with his once-immense popularity fading away. Nevertheless his tales of Craig Kennedy had been read by hundreds of thousands, praised by Theodore Roosevelt, and turned into early film-serials which held us petrified.

Craig Kennedy was Professor Kennedy of, presumably, Columbia University. Like Dr. Thorndyke, he was the scientific detective. His laboratory flashed with stranger sparks, and bubbled with more weird beakers and test-tubes, than the laboratory of the late Dr. Frankenstein. For each occasion he had some new gadget, guaranteed sensational, to clap on somebody's wrist or wire underneath the chair. Square-jawed Kennedy in his high collar, whom we remember so well from the illustrations in the Harper editions, has marched into limbo with all his gadgets loaded on him. Much of his scientific knowledge, I believe, has been discredited. Nobody reads about him now. And yet . . .

He was first in the field of fiction with the lie-detector, with murder by electrolysis, with radium poisoning, with death from liquid air. He taught writers the use of the Maxim silencer, and neither tears nor prayers nor curses can induce them to give it up. As a final achievement among many, in a story called "The Dream Detective" and later in a novel called *The Soul Scar,* it was he who introduced the profession to psychoanalysis.

This, in its way, is a solemn thought. For the humble annals of the detective story, it is like Watt studying the boiling kettle or Franklin flying the kite in the thunderstorm. In these days when every other mystery novel depends on a neurosis or a phobia or a fixation or what-not, we can see now what wild vegetation has grown from that small seed. Psychoanalysis has been the most widely used contribution to the detective story since the days of Poe and Conan Doyle; and we might do worse than remember who planted the jungle in which our contemporaries lose themselves.

Well, never mind. We were discussing the American situation in the 20's.

Shortly past the middle of the decade, S. S. Van Dine published *The Benson Murder Case,* in which Alvin Benson was shot to death under circumstances which suggested the fate of Joseph Elwell the bridge-expert. It was not a reconstruction of the Elwell case, as we can see for ourselves if we read the real-life account of the police-officer in charge of that affair. But it brought forward a new writer who juggled suspects with such dexterity, like whirling Indian-clubs, that we could only stare in admiration; and a new detective, Philo Vance, who said

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his method was psychology and scorned the cigarette-ends found near Benson's body. Three years later, when a crooked lawyer was poisoned with some villainous new stuff called tetra ethyl lead in *The Roman Hat Mystery,* we saluted Ellery Queen.

Though these were the only practitioners of the front rank, both were so good that they held the scales almost level against their British confrères. It looked, in those far-off days, as though the golden age of the detective story had come. It now played strictly fair. It was adult. It had lost its clumsiness and grown to maturity.

Then came the 1930's. Then came the cleavage. The hard-boiled detective story, which for some years had been lurking in the magazines without anybody suspecting its inherent genius, suddenly blossomed out until it shadowed the whole field. Few writers, even experienced ones who had been dealing with a different type of story, were completely untouched by its influence. Novices rushed to get aboard the band-wagon. And there began, between the school of Sherlock Holmes and the school of Sam Spade, a difference which has been widening for more than thirty years.

Let us consider the hard-boiled type of story.

Whether you prefer this kind of writing is a matter of personal taste. Whether you acclaim it as good, on the other hand, depends on how it is done. If anybody wants to see how "economical, astringent, muscular prose" should really be handled, let him re-read the best stories of Melville Davisson Post. Post was a great master of prose style, whereas most of the moderns are fairly answerable to some other description.

But we are not here concerned with literary quality. We are concerned with the detective story, and what goes into it. Dashiell Hammett has been praised as "a creator of the first rank," belonging among "the small handful of others who brought something really new to their chosen field of effort," and as one whose "lean, dynamic, unsentimental narratives created a definitely *American style,* quite separate and distinct from the accepted English pattern."

These are the words of Howard Haycraft, a sound critic, an admirable critic whose opinions we are bound to respect, and whom we can accuse of eccentric or unbalanced literary judgment only when he praises an undeserving hound named Carter Dickson.

But this originality, this glory of breaking fresh ground, again depends on what you do. You could get a finely original effect, for instance, by sending a whole procession of kangaroos across the stage during a performance of *Lohengrin* at Covent Garden or the Metropolitan

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Opera. You would be, definitely, a creator. You would have brought something really new to your chosen field of work. Or, to be more restrained about it, you could decide that the trouble with musical shows was the use of music, and the thing to do was have the musical show without any music at all; just as you can decide to have the detective story without any clues to follow or any rules to observe.

As we earlier discussed the saga of Brace and Du Kink, let's take a typical American detective novel of the later 30's. Its plot runs something like this:

The hero, Chip Hardstone, is a wise-cracking private detective with an attractive blonde stenographer. To Chip's office, in violent agitation, comes the lean, elderly, aristocratic J. T. Witherspoon, a millionaire with a country house in Sundown Hills.

Mr. Witherspoon's daughter, it appears, has got herself involved with a notorious character called Smooth Ed Spumoni. A priceless crystal flask, with gold-work by Benvenuto Cellini, has been stolen from the millionaire's collection. Matters at home are tense, since—in addition to his ne'er-do-well son, his rebellious daughter, and his neurotic young wife—Mr. Witherspoon has further grounds for suspicion in that the butler is a blackmailer, the chauffeur an ex-convict, and the housekeeper a hop-head. What he wants, he says, is to recover the Cellini crystal and free his daughter from the clutches of Smooth Ed Spumoni.

"But no scandal, Mr. Hardstone!" pleads the millionaire. "Above all things, no scandal!"

Already, before going to the country house, Chip has accumulated a lot of information. Practically every character in the story calls on him and tries to retain him. These he first bluffs and then insults—all except the representative of an insurance company, whom he merely insults.

Arrived at the house in Sundown Hills, Chip finds the "mad family" of earlier fiction now so completely nuts as to require a psychiatrist rather than a detective. The daughter removes her clothes; the wife intimates that she is willing to do so; the son tries to knock Chip's head off on sight. Other friends swing punches at the son, at Chip, or at each other; and Chip, who replies by insulting everybody he has previously missed, is interrupted with the discovery that one of the guests has been found dead—his throat mangled—in the swimming pool.

(Observe the departure of originality here. The millionaire himself is seldom murdered. He must be kept alive to pay Chip's fee.)

But one of the guests is murdered. No less than eight persons, it appears, know some vital secret about the murder. All of them have disappeared. It being Chip's job to find them, in a roulette-ball spin round

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the city, he concentrates first on a mysterious red-haired girl who has been traced to an apartment house at the corner of Pineapple and Banana.

Racing to the apartment house, Chip finds the girl gone but a corpse on the floor. He flies to a second apartment house, only to find the girl gone again and another corpse on the floor. By the time he has reached the third apartment house and the fourth corpse, he is in a spot. The police are after him, the reporters are after him, Smooth Ed Spumoni is after him, even the millionaire is after him to call him off. Chip won't be called off. He intimates, with something very like blackmail, that the old s.o.b. can't get out of it after bringing *him* in.

"All the same," says Chip, "this set-up is hopeless!"

And again we agree, since the vital secrets turn out to be innocent side-games in which everybody is chiselling everybody else, and have nothing to do with the murders. Chip, on the point of being arrested by Captain Hooligan of the Homicide Bureau, suddenly gets an inspiration—it is never very clear how—that the murderer is J. T. Witherspoon's wife. He confronts her; there is a gun fight all over the house; and the wife, waiting only long enough to scream out a confession, falls dead at his feet.

This is the end of the story, leaving the reader in some doubt as to just what did happen after all.

Now why, at the outset, are the adventures of Chip Hardstone so vaguely familiar? What strikes a reminiscent note? Despite the original kind of hero, despite the spit-in-your-eye style of writing, despite the chases and sluggings and kidnappings, we seem to have met this motiveless and clueless method somewhere before.

Don't we see that it's Inspector Brace and Reginald Du Kink all over again?

Instead of cuff-links, bus-tickets, and lace handkerchiefs which bear no relation to the problem, we have "secrets" which bear no relation to the problem either. Instead of the suspects doing their ring-around-the-rosebush outside the library, they now rush away from capture in cars and aircraft; but they still act either for no reasons at all, or for no reasons that are ever explained.

As for the fairness of the evidence, or the quality of the solution, the same test can be applied.

The American wheel, in these hard-boiled stories of the 30's, had turned full circle. We were back again among the whiskers and mothballs of an earlier era. Those very detective-story features of which the reader complained most bitterly in 1920, the features which were its

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essential faults, the features which craftsmen had worked so hard to eliminate ever since, were triumphantly hailed as a daring new departure from convention.

This period in America, it is true, produced its own first-raters. In 1934, with a story called *Fer-de-Lance,* Rex Stout by sheer power of characterization and plot-construction at once joined the company of Ellery Queen and S. S. Van Dine. There was Anthony Abbot, whose grim first novel *About the Murder of Geraldine Foster*—based on a legend of Courvoisier and Lizzie Borden—never seems to have achieved the full critical acclaim it deserves. In the front rank, or very close to it, were Clayton Rawson and C. Daly King.

But these were all practitioners in the great tradition, the clue-serpents and trap-baiters. Their narratives moved as fast as you could wish for; yet they ranged beside their British confrères of the same period, Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh and Nicholas Blake, in the vital business of presenting new ideas. In Nicholas Blake's first novel, *A Question of Proof,* you will find one instance of what is meant by the great tradition. The murder-knife unaccountably vanishes; and the investigators can't find it because it has been hidden, in front of their eyes, by being used as a tent-peg.

Yes; but what about the weaknesses in the English type of novel?

The fault here is just the same, though expressed in a different way. The "literary" type, like the hard-boiled, is too often apt to mistake style for substance. It imagines that with good writing, which sometimes becomes merely pretentious writing, you can disguise the lack of an original plot.

"Come, now!" the author seems to be saying. "I'm really a straight novelist, you know, indulging in this funny little medium of the detective story because nowadays it's become respectable. It's true I haven't got much of a mystery, or any very clear idea of how to handle it; but, if I give you strong characterizations and much talk-in-a-mist, you won't mind that?"

To which the answer is: Sir or madam, we do mind. Either you neglect the plot, which is bad; or else you fall off those stilts with a crash, which is worse.

(The next five sections of John Dickson Carr's Introduction deal with his reasons for not including Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* and Anna Katharine Green's *The Leavenworth Case,* and with his analyses of the ten detective novels which the publishers of his projected anthology called *The Ten Best,* but which Mr. Carr preferred, wisely, to call ten

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"of the" best . . . Perhaps, in a future issue of EQMM, we will bring you these fascinating, enlightening, and perceptive analyses by one of the foremost detective-story writers of our time and of all time.)

So we come to the end of a survey which has covered many years and no inconsiderable number of books. And now (I confess it) I am seized by a horrible temptation. My Better Nature, seraphic with upturned eyes and halo, pleads and whispers, "No!" But the devil won't be denied; gleefully he beckons. I have enjoyed writing this introduction so much—in contrast, it is to be feared, to the labours of the weary reader—that I want to end it with a list of rules on What To Do and What Not To Do.

Admittedly, this has been done in full tabular style by Carolyn Wells, by S. S. Van Dine, by H. Douglas Thomson, by Basil Hogarth, by Howard Haycraft, and others. More cautious lines have been taken by Monsignor Knox and by Miss Sayers herself. And I think these two latter writers were wise.

Once the evidence has been fairly presented, there are very few things which are not permissible. The oath of the Detection Club, stern though it may sound, does not forbid the employment of conspiracies, gangs, death-rays, ghosts, trap-doors, mysterious Chinese or homicidal lunatics. It is not so harsh as that. It merely enjoins the writer to preserve "a seemly moderation" in the use of them. The only thing it rules out, and rightly rules out, is the use of mysterious poisons unknown to science.

Those who nail a manifesto to the wall, saying, "The beginner will do this, and must under no circumstances do that," are in many cases quoting not rules but prejudices. That is the danger. It is a prejudice, like my own prejudice against having the murder turn out to be a suicide; and should freely be indicated as such. With all due respect and admiration for those who have compiled lists, it would not be difficult to show that they were often giving dubious advice and sometimes talking arrant nonsense.

"Disguise," declares one writer—to take a single instance—"disguise, of course, went out with the bustle."

To which the answer is: "My dear sir, that is a prejudice. Furthermore, it's not true. Have the goodness to read, among other stories with whose titles half a page could be filled, G. K. Chesterton's 'The Dagger with Wings,' R. Austin Freeman's *The Mystery of Angelina Frood,* Q. Patrick's *S.S. Murder,* Ellery Queen's *The Dutch Shoe Mystery,* Philip MacDonald's *The Wraith,* E. C. Bentley and H. W. Allen's

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Trent's Own Case, Anthony Berkeley's *Top-Story Murder,* or Agatha Christie's *Three-Act Tragedy*. Disguise is one of the best weapons in the armoury. The test of a device is not whether it is new or old; there's nothing new under the sun; the test is what novel twist can be put on it."

Here, then, is my own list of Do's and Don'ts: compiled partly from those of the writers quoted above and partly from my own heart's blood.

1. The criminal shall never turn out to be the detective, or any servant, or any character whose thoughts we have been allowed to share.

2. The criminal shall never at any time be under serious suspicion until the unmasking. If you haven't the ingenuity to keep his identity a secret until the end, at least pretend you have. Even if the reader outguesses you, and your thunderbolt-ending doesn't come off, the effect is far more satisfying than if you apologize for your murderer by "clearing" him in an early chapter.

3. The crime shall be the work of one person. While the murderer in some instances may be allowed to have a confederate, you will ruin your story if two or three or four people are dragged in as accomplices. The essence of a detective story is that the one guilty man shall fool the seven innocent; not that the one innocent shall be fooled by the seven guilty.

4. The crime shall be clean-cut. If a character disappears and is assumed to be murdered, state frankly what has happened to him. If he hasn't been murdered it's a pity; but the reader has a right to a clear stating of the problem.

Those are four golden maxims. In each one I believe. And each one you will find shattered—shattered admirably, shattered to bits, shattered by a mighty hammer—in the "best" detective novels, while the reader wishes to do nothing but applaud. Because they are not really rules; they are only prejudices.

The greatest trap into which a critic can fall is to maintain that something is being "done" in the current year, as though there were a style in shrouds as well as in hats, or to maintain that something else has gone out of fashion. When Carolyn Wells's *The Technique of the Mystery Story* was first published in 1913, the late Miss Wells was already talking about outworn devices. But nothing ever has gone out of fashion, and nothing ever will, provided only that the old trick can be worked in a new way. Yesterday's fashion may not be today's; but it may be none the worse for that. On the contrary, it may be a devil of a sight better.

So let them write their stories, the hopeful young men and women!

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Let them not be frightened by that worst bogey of all, the feeling that they have got to be innovators. Let them remember that the real test of their mental skill is in the drive and nimbleness and strategy of their play; it does not consist in putting the goal-posts in the middle of the field or dashing through half the game with a ball that isn't here. And you and I, serene in our armchairs as we read a new detective story, can continue blissfully in the old game, the great game, the grandest game in the world.

Second thoughts — after 17 years

I well remember when and how the above outburst was written. It was written in London during the cold and gusty spring of 1946, and in my flat on Haverstock Hill. Despite an acute housing shortage, I had obtained that flat for reasons quite apart from my Scottish luck. When I moved into it in 1943, Adolf Hitler still walked the earth. He had yet to unleash the Little Blitz, the flying bombs, the rockets, and other drolleries from his inexhaustible sense of humour. But we were all expecting something of the sort. And nobody except your obedient servant was stupid enough to want a flat on the top floor.

If I were to write again of favourite detective novels, should I change anything above? Not one sentiment, not one author. The ensuing 17 years have produced no writers who are better, nor any (tell it not in Gath) one-half so good. It may be that for four of the authors I should choose a different novel. A. E. W. Mason, for instance, might better be represented by *The House of the Arrow;* Philip MacDonald by *The Rasp;* Ellery Queen by *The Chinese Orange Mystery;* and Dorothy L. Sayers by *Strong Poison.*

But this is a minor matter; it is the author and his detective who count. "Then you still believe all that?" will be the whisper of kindly friends. "Haven't you learned anything in all these years?" Since I have learned wisdom in no other respect, it is useless to hope for it here. And a man should always be willing to defend his prejudices. As he gets on in years, those prejudices may constitute the most satisfactory sum total of all the things he has — or is.

John Dickson Carr

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a new story by

EDITOR'S FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD
TITLE:	*No One Ever Suspected*
TYPE:	Crime Story
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Out of an estate of more than a million he received only a pittance ($20,000) . . . so he planned the perfect murder to get what he thought he was entitled to.*

THEY SAY THERE IS NO SUCH thing as a perfect murder. That's nonsense. I committed one, and no one ever suspected. I was the hero who tried in vain to save my victim's life.

It was ridiculous to leave all that money to a stupid little girl ten years old. I say she was stupid, and she was; people who aren't stupid know by instinct whether they are loved or hated. I hated her, and she attached herself to me like a lonely puppy. She had no feeling whatever for self-preservation.

He was stupid too—Richard, her father, my brother—really my half brother, if you like, but that makes no difference. Oh, he fobbed me off with a small legacy—$20,000 out of an estate of more than a million. He might have known that nobody with any self-respect could let that go, and he certainly knew I was the only blood relation the girl had, since her mother had died at her birth and there were no other children.

He even had some inkling of how much he could trust me, for he didn't make me Leta's guardian. That, if you please, was the trust officer of the bank, and he had complete control of the money she inherited. She was put in a boarding school—she was old enough for that—but she came to me (willingly, eagerly, the poor little fool!) on her school vacations. Of course, they paid me a pittance for her care

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at such times—so that I could hire a temporary housekeeper and provide suitable accommodations in my bachelor's quarters.

So I knew from the beginning when I must do it. And how I could do it was equally plain, for the suburban town I live in is on the bay. I decided to spend one whole summer in preparation, laying all my plans subtly and carefully, and then bringing it off the next summer, when she would be eleven.

The $20,000 Richard had doled out to me would do me nicely for a year or two, without my having to sell myself into slavery to some employer or try any more of the enterprises which always seemed to fizzle out in failure and debts, and from which I had had to humiliate myself by asking Richard time and again to extricate me. Richard wasn't there any more to give me his grudging help, and there was no sense in tying myself up to something that would only consume my time and bore me silly.

I've always felt that if I had the leisure I could do something with writing, and that first year I finished two or three short stories which I knew were really good—but I was the only one who knew it, for as usual they all came back to me with nothing but insulting printed rejection slips. Two or three experiments of that kind proved to me what I've always suspected—the only way to get into print is to know the right people and (indirectly, I assume) to return favors for favors.

Well, if they didn't want me I didn't want them, so for most of that first year I had a pretty comfortable time just amusing myself. People always liked me—I've never had any trouble making or keeping friends; and of course I gave them to understand that I'd inherited at least half of my brother's estate, so naturally they respected me even more.

That first summer I devoted myself almost entirely to Leta. I declined some very nice invitations and stayed home all summer to entertain her. I hired a competent middle-aged woman to look after the big new waterfront apartment I could now afford and to take care of the child; and nobody could have had a happier holiday than Leta enjoyed for two solid tiresome months. We drove somewhere almost daily, we went on excursions and picnics, we went to the city often for shopping and dinners; we were inseparable.

I was a first-rate swimmer in those days, but of course I had no intention of making one out of Leta. On the other hand, it was essential that I should have her think I was doing just that. After all, the beach was at our front door. So I gave her a lot of swimming lessons—but not till the summer was more than half over—and I was so timid and overcautious that by the time she had to go back to school the

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best she could do was swim a few yards after a fashion.

Of course, I praised her achievements lavishly, and planted the idea that next summer she'd become practically a mermaid—and then, I promised, she could go out with me on the boats which took passengers out in the ocean for deep-sea fishing. I told her I would buy her a rod and reel, too; and to make her even more eager, the only times I left her all day with the boring housekeeper were half a dozen occasions when I myself went off for a day's cruise. She kept writing to me all that winter about how wonderful our next summer was going to be.

It was. I managed to hire the same woman again, and everything was lovely. We resumed our swimming lessons, and this time I kept telling Leta she was improving marvelously—that she was going to be a better swimmer than her old uncle. As a matter of fact, she was very little better than she had been before—I saw to that—and would be utterly helpless on her own in deep water.

But after less than three weeks I announced that the time had come, much faster than I had expected. Her eleventh birthday was due the week after; I bought her a light rod and all kinds of fancy equipment, and informed her to her delight that we would celebrate her birthday by my taking her on her very first fishing trip. Naturally, I didn't inform her it would also be her last!

She was so excited she was up and dressed before dawn. We did have to get there early, as the boats go out around seven. Mrs. Harris, the housekeeper, packed a big fancy lunch for us, and I made sure she'd be kept busy all afternoon preparing a gala dinner and baking a decorated cake for the birthday party I'd promised Leta when we got home in the evening. We arrived at the wharf in plenty of time, and it was a fine sunny day. I felt lucky.

These fishing boats that hire out at so much a head in the tourist season are quite long and powered by combustion engines. Usually the Captain (and owner) and one deckhand are the entire crew. They have a tiny cabin and all the rest is open deck, with the passengers fishing from the rails.

We spent the whole morning normally, just like all our companions. I taught Leta the rudiments of handling her fishing rod and other gear, and let her have the fun of holding her own line, though it was understood that if she hooked anything sizable I'd have to take over, since she wouldn't have the strength to pull in a struggling fish.

She was the only child aboard, and the other passengers—they were mostly tourists, middle-aged couples and a few singles, all very cheerful and chummy—made a pet of her. Leta really was a charming

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little girl—too friendly and trusting for her own good, but very attractive; I could have grown quite fond of her under other circumstances, and I was honestly sorry that by her father's shortsightedness she stood in the way of my superior interest.

The salt air had given her a great appetite and I urged her to eat a tremendous lunch. I myself, of course, ate very little; I didn't want to risk a cramp—for me. She hadn't had a bite all morning, and I'd hauled in two fair-sized sea bass, so she was wildly excited and kept chattering to everybody about how she was determined to beat me before the boat turned back.

Everything went according to plan. The one thing I'd worried about was that she might not be a good sailor, but luck was with me even in this; the sea wasn't very rough and she never felt a qualm. We laughed together over the two or three landlubbers who had to retire to the little cabin and lie down.

I decided the time had come.

I told her I'd let my own fishing go for a while and we'd concentrate on catching something for her. I stood beside her at the rail—there were people all around, but I managed to find a little space where we could be more or less alone—and watched and instructed her, ready, I assured her, to take over any time she couldn't manage.

Suddenly I leaned over and whispered excitedly, "Leta! You've hooked something! I can see your line jerking!"

"I don't feel anything."

"There—see? Hold tight!" I stretched out my hand toward her rod.

"No!" she cried, all agog. "Let me!"

"You can't get the leverage you need," I said. "Wait—if you can climb on the rail and lean over—I'll hold you so you'll be safe."

She scrambled up at once.

I glanced around to make sure nobody was looking.

Then I pushed her.

She screamed as she went over, but my own yell drowned her scream.

Everybody turned; people began dropping their rods and running toward me.

"Stop the boat!" I shouted. "Oh, my God! I turned my head just for a second and she climbed up and was pulled over!"

I'd practiced that speech a hundred times; it went over beautifully, perfectly.

Instantly there was made confusion. The Captain and the deckhand ran for the engine and got in each other's way bucking the passengers who milled around them. As soon as I saw that I had witnesses, I pulled off my shoes and dived from the boat. It hadn't been more than two minutes from the time she'd fallen.

I caught up with her quickly. She hadn't panicked, but the few

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feeble strokes she could make were enough only to keep her from going under immediately. With my body interposed between her and the boat, I cried out hoarsely, "I've got her! Throw me a rope!"

In the next moment I thrust her surreptitiously at arm's length from me, and pressed her head below the surface. I threshed around as if she had slipped away from me and I was searching for her. She struggled, but I held her under and she soon became limp. In a few more moments I was sure she was beyond reviving.

As I said, I was a strong swimmer, but I'd been through a strenuous time. Suddenly I felt weak from the strain—mentally even more than physically. I swam back to the boat with her, but as I reached for the rope they'd thrown over, I felt my arms and legs trembling.

I missed the rope, and Leta slipped from my grasp and her body was washed away from me. I swam fast after her, fighting the waves. I dared not lose the body—it was my legal proof that she was dead and that therefore I was the only heir to her fortune.

It had all happened so rapidly—there hadn't been time yet even to stop the engine, and the boat was still moving. I had to swim head-on to the bow to catch up with the floating corpse before it sank. With my last strength I grabbed it and held on.

Then I went black and began to float with my burden—at the mercy of the backwash and the waves.

They got us up finally—the deckhand and one of the passengers jumped in and seized both of us. By the time we reached the deck she was dead, of course, and I was still unconscious. When I came to, I was lying on the bare wood.

I remember my first thought: "What incredible luck! Now they will be sure I almost drowned trying to rescue her!"

They did. I was never even suspected for a minute. The next day's papers had first-page headlines about my heroism. There was an inquest, but it was perfunctory and the verdict of "death by accidental drowning" was automatic.

A year later, as Leta's next of kin, I received the whole legacy which should by rights have been mine in the first place.

I am spending it on useless hospitals and worthless doctors. I was swept against the propeller in that last wild dash, and my spinal cord was crushed. I shall always be almost completely paralyzed. All I can move are my lips.

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BEST MYSTERIES OF 1962

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

1962, year of stress and crisis . . . what sort of year was it for crime? A good one, on the whole—indeed an excellent one in the field that may most interest the readers of EQMM, the short story. There 1962 brought forth three topnotch collections by old masters:

BEWARE OF THE TRAINS, *by Edmund Crispin* (Walker, $3.50)
A MAN NAMED THIN, *by Dashiell Hammett* (Mercury 233, 50¢)
THE ORDEAL OF MRS. SNOW, *by Patrick Quentin* (Random, $3.50)

plus four brilliant mainstream books including many crime stories:

FICCIONES (Grove, $3.50) and **LABYRINTHS** (New Directions, $5.50), ***by Jorge Luis Borges***

VOICES AT PLAY, *by Muriel Spark* (Lippincott, $4)
COLLECTED STORIES, *by Mark Van Doren* (Hill & Wang, $5.95)

Anthologies flourished too, with the hardy annuals in great form:

CREAM OF THE CRIME, *by members of Mystery Writers of America* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $3.95)
TO BE READ BEFORE MIDNIGHT, *edited by Ellery Queen* (Random, $4.95)
ELLERY QUEEN'S 1963 ANTHOLOGY (Davis, $1)

and two unusual selections of full-length novels and plays:

FIVE SPY NOVELS, *edited by Howard Haycraft* (Doubleday, $5.95)
THREE PLAYS ABOUT CRIME AND CRIMINALS, *edited by George Freedley* (Washington Square W-658, 60¢)

What sort of year was it for first novels? Bad, especially in America, which produced only one truly distinguished "first":

THE FUGITIVE, *by Robert L. Fish* (Simon & Schuster, $3.50)

England did somewhat better with two markedly off-trail debuts:

THE BRONZE PERSEUS, *by S. B. Hough* (Walker, $3.50)
SEANCE, *by Mark McShane* (Crime Club, $3.50)

For the hard-boiled novel? Not so good, with only one genuinely tough novel of harsh violence:

365, *by Donald E. Westlake* (Random, $3.50)

For the historical mystery? Good, with a dozen entries topped by

THE DEMONIACS, *by John Dickson Carr* (Harper & Row, $3.95)
THE CHINESE NAIL MURDERS, *by Robert van Gulik* (Harper & Row, $3.95)

For the police procedural novel? Fair, with at least one outstanding:

THE D. I., *by Jeffrey Ashford* (Harper, $3.50)

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For the old-fashioned delight of devious plotting? Surprisingly good, with three books that should startle the wariest veteran:

THE PALE HORSE, *by Agatha Christie* (Dodd, Mead, $3.75)
MURDER BY PROXY, *by Brett Halliday* (Torquil-Dodd, Mead, $3.50)
PERFECT PIGEON, *by Richard Wormser* (Gold Medal s1201, 35¢)

For the spy-pursuit thriller? A drab year, redeemed only by

CORMORANT'S ISLE, *by Allan MacKinnon* (Crime Club, $3.50)

For suspense novels of the preternatural? They were few but fine:

A HOUSE POSSESSED, *by Charity Blackstock* (Lippincott, $3.50)
THE SCARLET BOY, *by Arthur Calder-Marshall* (Harper, $3.95)

Most importantly, what sort of year was it for the modern crime novel —the serious study of character in terms of crime, detection and surprise? Excellent, with a half dozen novels to stand beside the best of the past:

WHEN I GROW RICH, *by Joan Fleming* (Washburn, $3.50)
WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE, *by Shirley Jackson* (Viking, $3.95)
THE SPOILT KILL, *by Mary Kelly* (British Book Centre, $3.25)
THE ZEBRA-STRIPED HEARSE, *by Ross Macdonald* (Knopf, $3.50)
HOW LIKE AN ANGEL, *by Margaret Millar* (Random, $3.50)
THE PLAIN MAN, *by Julian Symons* (Harper & Row, $3.50)

For writings about suspense fiction? Unusually rich, with three books for the permanent library:

RAYMOND CHANDLER SPEAKING, *edited by Dorothy Gardiner & Kathrine Sorley Walker* (Houghton Mifflin, $4)
THE DETECTIVE STORY IN BRITAIN, *by Julian Symons* (British Book Centre, 65¢)
SHERLOCK HOLMES OF BAKER STREET, *by William S. Baring-Gould* (Potter, $5)

For fact-crime? It was a year deficient in good full-length studies of single cases, but with one worth noting:

THE STUART CASE, *by K. S. Inglis* (Cambridge U., $6.50)

but much brightened by part two of the greatest reference book on crime:

A SECOND COMPANION TO MURDER, *by E. Spencer Shew* (Knopf, $4.50)

and two admirable compendiums of American regional murder:

THE GRAVESIDE COMPANION [California], ***edited by J. Francis McComas*** (Obolensky, $4.50)
MURDER IN MINNESOTA, *by Walter N. Trenerry* (Minn. Hist. Soc., $3.95)

And lastly, what sort of year was it for Boucher? I shall let no false modesty obscure the fact that I edited two anthologies which are among the best of any year—thanks to Ellery Queen who originally edited the short stories in the first, and to the members of MWA who wrote the fact-crime essays in the seconds:

THE QUINTESSENCE OF QUEEN (Random, $5.95)
THE QUALITY OF MURDER (Dutton, $3.95)

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- M • 4229 **See Them Dying,** Ed McBain
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- 2846 **Pick Up On Noon Street** Raymond Chandler
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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 246th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . The author, in a letter accompanying the manuscript, described his tale as "a shaggy dog story"—and that it is; but as the author also informed us, it is "pirated from a legend I heard as a kid in the hill country of Pennsylvania." So, once again we offer you an authentic piece of the purest American folklore—which has its own grand and glorious flavor.

The author was graduated in 1956 from the University of Florida, where he received a B.A. in political science. He promptly became a career naval officer, and after a two-year tour in the heavy cruiser, Rochester, he went to Submarine Officers' School in New London, Connecticut. He was subsequently assigned to Pearl Harbor and the U.S.S. Sabalo, in which ship he was serving as Operations Officer when, during in-port watchstanding, he wrote his "first story" . . . Let's hear more from you, Lieutenant!

THE DAY THE SHERIFF'S DOG DIED

by CLYDE SHAFFER

LINC BENTLEY WAS SHERIFF OF Austinburg (population 582) for three reasons. First, he'd been a sergeant in Korea and was, therefore —in the eyes of the town burghers— presumably familiar with firearms. Second, he'd had almost a whole year of college, on the G.I. Bill. And finally, he was the only man in Austinburg willing to accept the job.

Rufe Barlow, on the other hand, was Deputy Sheriff for only one reason: no one else in town would hire him, so Linc, in a characteristic gesture, took him on just to keep Rufe's feelings from being hurt. As a result of this kindness, Rufe was a loyal and devoted, if not mentally adept, assistant. For $80 a month, and board, he kept the jail swept down, nursed the town drunks on payday nights, and cleaned the office firearms, none of which had been discharged since Austinburg received the news of V-J Day—almost twenty-four hours after most of the rest of the United States.

Once Linc tried to teach Rufe how to read, figuring that such a skill might come in handy in the unlikely event the Sheriff's Office ever

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received a Wanted circular from the outside world; but Rufe had little interest in the project, and Linc soon dropped it.

Having a helper, and being the bachelor law officer in a town where the law hadn't been broken since the end of Prohibition, allowed Linc plenty of time for hunting and fishing. Late on a hot September afternoon he returned to the square, stone building which doubled as jail and home, hung a string of bass from one of a half-dozen racked Winchesters in the hallway, and turned toward the office.

He found Rufe reclining in the sole chair provided by the taxpayers, his boots propped up on a near corner of a desk scarred by the countless boots of other Deputies who had had nothing better to do during their tenures.

"Hi, Rufe," said Linc, up-ending the empty wastebasket and squatting on it, "anybody rob the bank while I was gone?" This was a long-standing joke shared by the two men. Austinburg didn't have a bank.

"No-o-o," said Rufe, taking his cue and providing the stock reply, "the James Boys ain't hit town yet, but—"

"But what?" Linc was a little surprised by this variation, however small, in their standard dialogue.

Rufe had the habit of starting every other sentence with the word "Well," unconsciously allowing himself time to think of which word he wanted to use next. Linc therefore waited patiently while Rufus said "Well" and then lapsed into thoughtful concentration.

"Linc," Rufe continued finally, "I hate havin' to be the one to tell you this, but . . . well, Linc, while you were gone your dog died." He spoke this last rapidly, as if anxious to get it off his chest.

Linc's gaze traveled out the window to the back yard and the rolling hills which lay beyond. "Buck was a good dog, Rufe. Got him when he was just a pup, before the war. Guess old age finally caught up with the poor fella."

"Wasn't old age killed Buck, Sheriff. He got hit by a car."

"Whose car?" snapped Linc. He stood up and leaned over the desk, planting his palms on its surface and looking squarely at his Deputy. "Whose car was it, Rufe?"

Rufus unhinged his legs from the corner of the desk and leaned away from the angry Sheriff. "Sam Daugherty's," he answered.

"Sam Daugherty? That don't sound like Sam. Why, he never drove that car of his more'n twenty miles an hour."

"I didn't say Sam was drivin', Sheriff. Fact is, he wasn't. The guys that stole Sam's car was the ones hit Buck."

"Stole Sam's car? For the love of Pete, who would steal a car here in Austinburg?"

"Well," said Rufe, "I can't say as I know that. They wasn't from Austinburg."

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"How'd they get in town then? And why'd they need to steal a car in the first place?" shouted Linc.

Rufe fished a package of Bull Durham out of a shirt pocket and frowned at the label. He said finally, "I don't reckon I know the answer to that one either, but I suppose they needed it to get clear of town."

"Get clear of town? Rufe, what in the name of Godfrey has been going on around here? I leave you alone for half a day and you let some outsiders steal Sam's car and kill my dog. Get clear of town," Linc repeated. "Why'd they need to do that?"

"Well, I reckon," said Rufe, "that after they held up Doc Wilson's pharmacy they figured I might have to lock 'em up less'n they left Austinburg."

"Held up—now look here, Rufe." Linc knew he was losing his temper, so he paused for a deep breath before continuing. "You mean to tell me two guys come into town, rob the drug store, steal a car, and get away without you doing a darn thing but just set here?"

"Well, no," said Rufe. "You see, Sheriff, there wasn't nothin'—"

Linc cut him off. "What do you mean there wasn't nothing you could do? Man, didn't you ever read a detective book? No, I forgot, you wouldn't pay no attention to them lessons I gave you. Why, all we got to do is get a description of these guys from Sam, along with one of his car, and phone it over to the State Police Barracks in Marlowe's Creek. They've got a teletype that'll put out a five-state alarm."

"That's a fine idea, Sheriff." Rufe's admiration of Linc's knowledge of modern police methods was unbounded. "The part about sendin' the troopers a description of Sam's car, I mean. But I'm afraid you can't get a description of them crooks from Sam. Anyways, it—"

"What d'you mean I can't get a description from Sam? He saw 'em, didn't he?"

"Sure he saw 'em," replied Rufe. "That's just the trouble, they saw Sam too. He tried to stop 'em and one guy pulled a gun and shot Sam. He ain't dead, but he's unconscious over at the county hospital. But it don't—"

"Rufe, this town ain't had a crime in near thirty years, let alone a crime wave. Now in one afternoon we got a store robbed, a man shot, and a car stole." Linc strode over to an otherwise empty file cabinet, pulled out a gunbelt and holstered .44 caliber Colt. "I'm going over and get a description of these guys from Doc Wilson at the drug store. You stay here, phone the hospital, and find out how Sam's getting along."

"Hold on a minute, Linc. Doc ain't at the pharmacy."

"Where in thunderation is he, then?"

"I been tryin' to tell you for the last ten minutes," said the Deputy Sheriff, "but all you do is tie up the air with a lot of fool questions. Doc

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Wilson's dead. He wouldn't give 'em the cash box, so they shot him dead. Right behind the soda fountain. He was mixin' a chocolate sundae for little Billy Walker at the time. Scared Billy near to death. He—"

"I swear," said Linc, "I don't believe you could protect a bowl of milk from a hungry pussycat. I'm as sorry as all get-out about Doc, but we'll mourn him later. Right now we got more important things to do. Was there any witnesses? You've *heard* of witnesses, haven't you?"

Rufe defiantly put his feet back up on the desk and tugged at the strings on his pack of Bull Durham. "Sure I heard of witnesses, but there wasn't any. None but Billy Walker and he's hid out in the woods somewhere. His folks is pretty upset. Reckon we'll have to take a posse out after him, Sheriff. I never been on a posse before."

"No, we ain't going to deputize no posse. Far's I'm concerned Billy can stay out in the woods till he grows a beard and the F.B.I. gets him for dodging the draft." The sheriff threw his gunbelt down on the desk. "You phone the State Police and give 'em a description of Sam's car. Me'n Doc Wilson's brother, Lester, are pretty good friends. Somebody ought to go set awhile with Les, what with Doc gone. So I'll go over to his place. That is, I will unless you got a reason why I can't do that either."

"He ain't home," said Rufe.

"Oh, he ain't home, huh. Well you're so danged psychic today, suppose you just tell me where you think he is then."

"Well," said Rufe, "I know where he *was* 'bout an hour ago."

"And just where was that, if it ain't none of my business?"

"Locked up in one of our cells," said Rufe glibly. "'Least I reckon he's still there, but I'll mosey on back and take another look, if you like."

Rufe smiled obligingly and proceeded to pour tobacco into a slip of wrapper.

Linc leaned across the desk and slapped paper and tobacco out of his Deputy's hands. "Good God Almighty," he shouted. "You're the worst eighty-dollar bargain the Town Council ever got. Doc Wilson gets himself killed and you lock up his brother. Now why in the world did you do a thing like that?"

"Had to. You see, it was like this, Sheriff. After them crooks held up the pharmacy and stole Sam Daugherty's car, they took off through town headin' for Millersville. Les Wilson was right behind them in his Ford and had his shotgun with him. Then they come past the jailhouse here and hit Buck. Sent 'em into a skid and they plowed right into the mailbox down at the corner. About that time along comes Les and blasts 'em both with his Remington. Crippled 'em just enough so they couldn't run." Rufe began making another cigarette. "So I locked

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Lester up on account he committed a Federal offense, and after I phoned Marlowe's Creek the troopers came and took them other two guys away."

Linc shook his head and laughed. "Rufe, you're the only cop I know can solve two robberies and a killing without ever leaving his office. Now give me the keys so I can turn Lester loose. Shootin' a couple of killers ain't any Federal offense. You ought to know that."

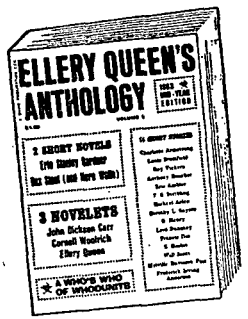
"I didn't say it was, Sheriff. But when Lester blasted them two guys he also drilled our mailbox as full of holes as a sieve. That's destroyin' the U.S. Mail," snorted Rufe, "and if that ain't a Federal offense, then I don't know what is."

"Rufus," said Linc patiently, "give me the keys."

His Deputy reluctantly handed them across the desk and Linc started to walk out of the office to the small cell block in the rear of the building. He hesitated at the door when Rufus called out his name.

"What now?" Linc asked.

"Sorry about your dog, Linc," said Rufe.



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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 247th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . a story with pace, shape, and impact—a modern "compact."

The author "breezily decided to become a fiction writer" when she was in high school (Akron, Ohio, in the mid-30s). Later, at Northwestern, she discovered radio, and on graduation became a continuity writer at WFMJ, Youngstown, Ohio. Then came marriage, and "there was no single moment when I nobly renounced it all to devote myself to home and family"; but long before her youngest child started school, in 1960, radio (as Jane Speed had known it) simply disappeared. So—"after a circuitous and eventful detour (marriage and three children)"—she set out again "on the road I originally hoped to travel" . . . and here is her "first story"—her first, we hope, of many safe arrivals . . .

ACCORDING TO PLAN

by JANE SPEED

DISCRETION IS THE KEYNOTE OF The Quiet Hour. The thick carpet and velvet-hung walls absorb all the hushed, urgent conversations that take place at the small tables shielded from each other by strategic arrangements of palm and fern. And Kathryn Mason, sitting alone at a table in the rear, suddenly knew she had her fill of this place—and all the places like it where she and Gerald McClain always met.

She glanced at her watch again. After eight. But of course he'd be late tonight. This was that eagerly awaited time of each year when his wife packed her bags and came into the city; and Gerald, playing the dutiful husband, took her to an early dinner and settled her into a hotel room so that she could get a good night's rest before catching the early morning train to Chicago to visit her mother. Then at last Kathryn and Gerald were free of her for a month.

One month, thought Kathryn bitterly—not much to show for six years of loving a man. But it was all she had and all she was likely to get unless something was done about it . . .

Then she saw Gerald coming to-

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ward her table, and steeled herself against the onslaught of his charm.

"Kit, darling, I *am* sorry," he said as he slid into the seat opposite. "There was some mixup about Mary Louise's room. Then I had to stop down at the desk and tell them she wasn't to be disturbed and—well, you know how she is." He grasped eagerly at the drink the waiter set in front of him. "Anyway, it's all taken care of now. And you and I have some celebrating to do. I wish we didn't have to go back to the office tonight."

"It doesn't matter," Kathryn said evenly. But something in her tone made Gerald glance at her warily.

"Well, tonight's work shouldn't take long," he said, "so why don't we go dancing afterwards? We could go over to—"

"Gerald, why don't you ask her for a divorce?"

He looked down at the table for a moment. "I did," he said finally. "Last night."

"You did?" Kathryn gasped. "Why didn't you tell me? What did she say?"

"Well." Gerald drank the contents of his glass, then carefully lit a cigarette. "At first she—she thought it was a joke. Can you imagine? Then . . . when she realized I was serious, she started to cry and got almost hysterical. It—was pretty awful."

"But you knew she'd act that way. Surely you didn't expect—"

"She began to unpack." Gerald bit off each word defiantly. "She said she wouldn't set foot outside the house unless I promised to forget the whole thing. Don't you see? We wouldn't even have our month together."

Kathryn stared at him in disbelief. "You—promised her—"

"You weren't there, Kit. You don't know what it was like. Why, she got out that damned gun—the one I bought her last year when there was supposed to be a prowler in our neighborhood. She carries it with her everywhere. Says she wouldn't feel safe without it. Safe! My God! Anyhow, she was pointing that thing at her head and . . . I swear, Kit, I thought she was going to do away with herself on the spot."

"I wish she had."

The quietly spoken words hung for a few seconds between them before George recovered sufficiently to speak. "Really, Kit," he said shakily, "what a thing to say."

"I meant it, Gerald. It would have saved us a lot of trouble."

"Kit! What—what are you talking about?"

"You know what I'm talking about," she continued relentlessly. "It's the only way we'll ever be rid of her. I think perhaps we've both known it for a long time. And we've got to do it tonight."

"No, Kit, no!" Gerald whispered hoarsely. "I don't love Mary Louise. But I—I couldn't . . . kill her."

"I know that," said Kathryn,

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amazed at her own calm. "You don't have to. I'll do it myself."

"But we—we'd never get away with it. They'd be sure to think I—"

"No. You'll have an alibi. We both will. We'll go back to the office together. Ben will take us up in the night elevator the way he always does when we work late. Then I'll go out by the fire-escape door. We'll prop it open with something so that I can get back in. I'll walk to the hotel—it's only eight blocks from the office. When I've . . . finished there, I'll come back the same way and we'll ride down together. Ben will swear we've been in the office all evening."

Gerald stared at her. "You seem to have given this a lot of thought," he said.

Kathryn met his accusing gaze. "I've had a lot of time to think. This isn't the first night I've sat here waiting for you."

His eyes dropped. "How . . . how you . . ."

"You said she always carries that gun. She has it now, hasn't she?"

Gerald nodded.

"I'll use that then. I'll get it from her somehow."

Gerald looked up. "Kit," he appealed, "can't you see how fantastic this is? There are so many ways it could go wrong."

"I'm willing to risk that. All I ask is that you stand by me." For the first time her voice trembled and her eyes grew moist. "Please, Gerald."

His shoulders sagged in defeat. "All right, Kit," he said. "All right."

"Well, we'll see you in a couple of hours, Ben," Gerald said with forced heartiness as he and Kathryn stepped out of the elevator.

"Yes, sir. And don't you folks work too hard now. 'Tain't worth it." Ben clanged the doors shut and started the elevator down.

Without a word Gerald and Kathryn walked to the door of his offices. He unlocked it and Kathryn went inside, picked up the doorstop from behind the door, came back out, and walked down the hall to the fire-escape door. Gerald watched unhappily as she tried the doorstop to see if it would hold.

"I guess that will do," she said at last.

Suddenly Gerald pulled her to him and held her close. "Oh, Kit, darling . . . why don't you forget this? Stay here—we'll have our month . . ."

For a moment Kathryn was tempted. Then she shook her head. "I want more than that, Gerald. This is our only chance. We've got to take it."

"All right," Gerald said heavily. "I'll be waiting for you."

Half an hour later Kathryn stood outside Room 518 of the Parkview Hotel, armed with a small sheaf of magazines and a box of candy.

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She raised her hand and knocked. There was no answer and she knocked again. The frustrating seconds ticked by, nibbling away at her precious veneer of calm.

She raised her arm to pound on the door, then caught herself in time. It wouldn't do to give way to panic now. She would simply have to wait. Mary Louise would surely be back soon. Wherever she was she couldn't have gone far—downstairs to the Coffee Shop, probably.

Kathryn walked down the hall to an alcove and sat on the window seat that curved inside it.

Twenty interminable minutes passed and still there was no sign of Mary Louise. Kathryn had almost made up her mind to try the door once more when the elevator opened and Mary Louise stepped out. Kathryn pulled quickly back into the dimness of the alcove.

She waited five minutes, then walked down the hall and knocked again on the door. There was a pause, then the door opened just a crack, and Mary Louise's reedy voice asked, "Who is it?"

"It's Kathryn Mason. Mrs. McClain." Kathryn moved into the dimly lighted room and closed the door behind her. "The girls at the office wanted to give you a little going-away present," she said, and as she talked she saw Mary Louise's handbag lying on the desk.

"Why, I—that's very thoughtful of you, I'm sure," said Mary Louise.

Kathryn moved briskly to the desk. As she set the magazines and candy down, she quickly opened the handbag and gave it a shove. It fell heavily, the contents spilling onto the floor. "So sorry," she murmured as she bent down.

"Don't bother." Mary Louise came forward. "Please, I can . . ."

But Kathryn had found what she wanted. Her hand closed around the gun and she rose, pointing it at the other woman. Mary Louise shrank back a few steps. Her lips moved but no sound came out.

Kathryn pulled the trigger. Mary Louise's eyes widened as if in surprise, and she crumpled to the floor.

Kathryn stood paralyzed for a moment. Then, rousing herself, she picked up Mary Louise's wallet and put it, with the gun, into her own purse. She crossed to the window that opened onto the fire escape and pushed it up so that it would look as if someone had entered through it. As she came back across the room she hesitated by the small lifeless heap, then forced herself to stoop down and remove the rings from the thin fingers.

Quickly, then, she went to the door and opened it slightly. The corridor was clear. She slipped out and closed the door without a sound.

Just as she turned the corner at the end of the hall, she heard a door open behind her, and another, and voices. Had they heard the shot? She started down the stairs,

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forcing herself to move sedately as though she had all the time in the world. But as soon as she reached the street she began to walk rapidly.

At every corner she seemed to hear a siren. Could it be the one bringing the police to the hotel? The first thing they'd do would be to notify Gerald. The hotel knew he was at his office. *What if the police got to him before she got back?*

She glanced longingly at the cabs whizzing by. But she didn't dare risk being seen by anyone who might remember her. She quickened her pace.

At last she turned into the areaway in back of the office building. She found the fire escape and started the upward climb, trying, as she went, to calculate. If the police had already arrived, maybe Gerald would have had the presence of mind to say she'd just gone down the hall to the washroom.

But if the doorstop had slipped and the door was closed tight? She could picture herself banging on the fire-escape door and the police coming to let her in.

She was half laughing, half sobbing, by the time she reached the fourth-floor landing. And—thank heaven!—the door opened at her touch. She kicked the doorstop aside and closed the door quietly, then tiptoed down the hall and let herself in at the door to the offices.

For a moment she stood motionless, listening. All quiet. The police hadn't come yet. Relief flooded through her as she sank weakly on the couch in the reception room.

"I made it," she said over and over. "It's all right—everything's going to be all right now."

She slipped off her coat, started back to tell Gerald, and had just gone through the doorway to her own office when she heard the clang of the elevator in the hall outside.

They were here. And she must summon all her wits and poise to see Gerald and herself through this last ordeal.

Suddenly she remembered her purse, with Mary Louise's gun and rings and wallet stuffed inside. She crossed quickly to her own desk and jammed the purse into the bottom drawer. No time now to warn Gerald. She had barely managed to straighten when the outer door opened.

"This is his office right here," came Ben's voice, overhelpful and trembling with subdued excitement. Then, as Kathryn came forward, "This is Miss Mason, Mr. McClain's secretary."

The two men nodded. "Johnson. Homicide," said one. "My partner, Leonard."

"How do you do—" Kathryn began. "Homicide! Is something wrong?"

"It's Mrs. McClain," Ben couldn't keep from bursting out. "Murdered," he added with something

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uncomfortably approaching relish.

Even as Kathryn registered the expected shock, she couldn't help noting the look of annoyance that passed over Johnson's face.

"Miss Mason, you've been here all evening with Mr. McClain?" the detective asked.

"Why, yes," Kathryn replied. "We finished up just a few minutes ago." She shook her head sadly. "I just can't believe it. Such a lovely woman."

As Kathryn talked she tried to think of some excuse she could use to go in to Gerald before the two detectives did. She wanted to make sure he knew that everything had gone according to plan and, more important, to try to give him some of her own strength. She knew he would need it to get through the approaching interview.

The two detectives started toward his door.

"I wonder," Kathryn ventured, "do you think it might be better if I broke the news to him? He and Mrs. McClain were very close."

"Nice of you to offer," said Johnson smoothly, "but I think we can handle it. When you get right down to it, there isn't really any easy way to break news like this."

Politely rebuffed, Kathryn had no choice but to watch them disappear through Gerald's door.

Beside her, Ben was gabbling unchecked. "It just don't seem possible. Why, it wasn't more'n a couple hours ago I was talkin' to her . . ."

Kathryn turned sharply, wondering if she had heard right.

"Standin' no further from me than you are right now," Ben went on.

"Here? In this building?"

"Why, yes, ma'am. Said there was something she forgot to give Mr. McClain. Didn't stay more'n a few minutes, then she rang and I came up and took her back down. Well—" He interrupted himself to laugh at his own foolishness. "You must of seen her, Miss Mason. You was here—"

"Oh, yes. Yes, of course, I—"

The office door opened and the smooth-voiced Johnson came out. "Miss Mason," he said. "I believe you said you were here all evening?"

"Yes. Yes, certainly I was." Kathryn was alarmed to hear her voice rising shrilly. She paused, then continued with great dignity. "Mr. McClain can tell you—"

Johnson shook his head. "No, ma'am," he said mildly, "I'm afraid he can't. Mr. McClain has a bullet through his head."

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a new story by

PHYLLIS BENTLEY

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**PHYLLIS BENTLEY**
TITLE:	***Miss Phipps Discovers America***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Miss Phipps
LOCALE:	A lake in the Adirondacks
COMMENTS:	*Miss Phipps combines pleasure with business on her first visit to the United States—and, in the classical tradition, meets murder wherever she goes . . .*

WHAT FIRST PUT YOU ON TO me?" asked the murderer.

"It was a matter of literary history," said Miss Phipps. She explained.

"I get your point, and I'm sorry," began the murderer, "because as it is—"

"That's the trouble, you see," said Miss Phipps sorrowfully, shaking her head. "One murder so often leads to another. I felt some sympathy for you about the first. I must warn you that I'm wearing a life-jacket," she added hastily.

"That won't help you any after a hard crack on the head with this paddle."

"A dangerous drifting log? I see. But my body will float."

"Not after my well-meant but futile attempts at rescue."

Miss Phipps plucked a whistle from her capacious bosom and blew three loud blasts . . .

On Wednesday morning Miss Phipps had wakened with a start. Whether it was the reflection of the lake water moving in silvery ripples across the bedroom ceiling, or whether it was some sound which had broken her slumber, Miss Phipps was not sure.

Her sleep had been heavy, for she had flown from London to New York the night before, then traveled by another plane, a car, and at

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last her host's new speedboat, to join her friends, the Stones, in their summer camp in the Adirondacks.

Waldo Stone—short, dark, square, hairy, and friendly—the editor of one of those glossy American magazines which pay such delightfully fabulous sums for serials and short stories, and his small blonde wife Louella, who wrote some of the stories, had been friends of Miss Phipps' ever since a tale of hers had first appeared in Waldo's "book." When Waldo and Louella had married a few years ago, after previous matrimonial misadventures, Miss Phipps had rejoiced greatly.

Now some kind of mixup had arisen about her new serial for Waldo and its television rights, and Louella had cabled her: WHY NOT COME OVER AND TAKE CARE OF IT AND PLAY ON OUR LAKE—and here she was. So far the Adirondack scenery was all that had been claimed for it. The mountains, the lakes, the huge pines, the chalk-white birches, the graceful spruce . . . Miss Phipps slipped out of bed, put on her spectacles, and went to the window.

The landscape visible from the Stones' handsome "camp"—this was the proper word, Miss Phipps had discovered, though she tended to think of these lakeside summer houses as wooden chalets—had been lovely in hot sunshine yesterday afternoon, when the lake waters were deep blue and the unbroken slopes of surrounding trees deep green; it had been lovely last night when a moonlight path lay across the black lake; it was lovely again now, in still another different guise.

The hour was very early, not quite full dawn, and as Miss Phipps watched a gleam of sun cut a narrow swathe of light across the lake through one of the stretches which divided the Erwins' pine-covered island from the mainland, wreaths of mist still swirled and brooded over the calm silver water. The Stones' wooden boat-dock lay full in this ray of light, but dark patches of moisture—footprints pointing to the shore—still remained on it here and there, undried.

Even as Miss Phipps gazed, however, the mist curled in on itself and gracefully withdrew. Across the water, to the left, on the point of their long private island, the Erwins' smartly painted white camp gleamed in the sunshine. Then suddenly the green of the trees brightened, and the lake water took on a delicate tinge of blue.

"Heavenly!" exclaimed Miss Phipps.

She slid back into bed and fell asleep.

It seemed only a moment—though in reality it was some three hours—before she was wakened again, this time by shouts of "Phippsy!"—for this was the name

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by which she went in the Stone household.

"Coming for a swim, Phippsy?" called Louella, putting her head round the bedroom door.

With some reluctance Miss Phipps heaved herself from the warm bed, squeezed her curves into a sea-blue swim suit, and went down to the boat dock, where Louella (in smart white) and Waldo (in scanty red) were already waiting.

"Hurry up, Randall!" cried Louella to the young man who, in a dark blue bathing suit sporting the white insignia of an athletic club, was neater than Miss Phipps had expected from his tousled appearance the night before. The young man was coming through the trees.

"Don't wait for me!" he called out.

There was more urgency in his tone than the occasion seemed to require, and Miss Phipps looked at him with some interest as he approached. He was tall, dark, and very thin, with a haggard aquiline face, a mass of tumbled black hair, and brilliant brown eyes. It had emerged last night that Waldo regarded him as one of the new young poets of whom America might hope one day to be very proud.

Louella had known Randall's mother at school, so they were both glad to invite him up to the camp for a month and had bedded him in one of their outlying cabins where he could be alone and work to his heart's content. He had felt like working last night soon after Miss Phipps' arrival—so that she had been able to settle the serial and television matter with Waldo at her ease, and had seen little of her fellow guest.

Now as he scrambled down the uneven bank she perceived that Martin Randall limped, and she remembered that Waldo had told her of the childhood riding accident which had crushed the bones of his left foot.

At this point Waldo, looking owlish without his glasses, splashed into the lake in a flat but vigorous dive. Louella lowered herself carefully down the vertical ladder from the dock into the lake, gave a girlish scream at the water's low temperature, and then floundered off in a somewhat spasmodic breast stroke. Miss Phipps followed with a similar scream and stroke, for the water was cold and deep. Randall, she observed, came down the ladder too; possibly his leg injury made it difficult for him to dive.

The day's program proved entirely delightful. After a quick dip, they sipped hot coffee beside a crackling log fire, ate an ample breakfast, dressed at their leisure, then began to make plans. Waldo and Louella decided to invite their lakeside friends for cocktails the next afternoon. As they had no telephone, the invitations must be given in person, and the quickest

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route was not by the distant and winding road, but by water.

Louella and her two guests went down to the boathouse and stood around while Waldo discussed which of the families who had camps around the lake were in residence with Ben Hunter, the guide employed by Waldo. With his lean height, long curly gray hair and beard, and rather impish blue eyes, he appeared to Miss Phipps the image of James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo in old age, and she listened to his calm ironic drawl with much enjoyment.

"Are the Erwins in, Ben?" inquired Louella.

"I wouldn't know anything about the Erwins, Mrs. Stone," said Ben. "But I've heard they came two days ago."

"Their flag isn't up," objected Waldo.

A gleam of amusement crossed Ben's blue eyes.

"I did hear as how Mr. Erwin was rather mad about that, Mr. Stone. Seems his flagstaff broke in a blow last winter. He ordered a new one from town, but they haven't delivered it yet. Seems he didn't pay his last bill there in full. Had an argument about an item, or something."

Miss Phipps gave a sympathetic murmur.

"Don't waste any sympathy on John Clayton Erwin, the third, Phippsy," said Louella tartly. "He's a rich playboy who never did a stroke of work in his life. Isn't that so, Ben?"

"I never heard of his working any," drawled Ben. "'Course, my testimony ain't impartial, ma'am," he added, turning to Miss Phipps.

"Ben worked for the Erwins at one time," explained Louella. "But they didn't see eye to eye on various matters, did you, Ben?"

"It was chiefly deer, Mrs. Stone," murmured Ben.

"Clay shot more deer than his license entitled him to," said Louella. "He was fined heavily and his license revoked—after Ben left him."

Ben gazed across the lake—possibly, thought Miss Phipps, to hide the spark of satisfaction which brightened his elderly eyes. "He's not what you'd call a good shot, Mrs. Stone," he murmured.

"We shall have to ask the Erwins all the same, Louella," said Waldo testily.

"That might spoil the party for your other guests, Mr. Stone," said Ben. "Professor Firbaum and those young Normans, it seems they don't feel very neighborly to Mr. Erwin."

"Why not?"

"I couldn't say, I'm sure, Mrs. Stone," said Ben. "Will that be all, Mr. Stone?"

"Yes, Ben," said Waldo.

"He's a native of these parts and knows everything about everyone," Waldo added to Miss Phipps as Ben disappeared among the trees.

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"So I gathered," said Miss Phipps.

A considerable discussion followed as to who should fetch the mail, who should give the invitations, and which boats should be used for these errands. It seemed that Waldo and Louella were both proficient paddlers, and Randall a promising pupil; Miss Phipps declined to attempt a paddle, but was eager to ride in a canoe. So one was drawn down from its rack and launched by Waldo with some noise and splash, but then rejected by Louella as too slow.

Miss Phipps was content to listen idly to the talk, lounging in the now blazing sunshine, and gazing out over the rippling blue lake. From time to time a boat or two passed in the distance; in the mountain peace every sound carried far and accurately across the water. All at once a loud bang nearby caused Miss Phipps to jump in alarm.

"A squirrel, Mr. Stone," said Ben, appearing with a long gun in one hand and a limp gray form in the other.

"Good," said Waldo.

"Why do you shoot squirrels?" asked Miss Phipps, her voice full of distaste.

"They eat the birds' eggs, ma'am," said Ben, disappearing again among the trees.

Miss Phipps sighed. She was familiar with the anomaly by which some people adored horses and dogs but hunted foxes; to love deer and birds and hate squirrels was part of the same perplexing paradox. But then all life was perplexing, mused Miss Phipps, since all animals, in order to sustain life, must destroy other life. Man, however, had imposed laws on this ruthless scheme—at least, to some extent.

"Dreaming up a plot, Phippsy?" shouted Waldo in her ear. "Your royal barge awaits you."

They all climbed into the speedboat and roared off down the lake.

Miss Phipps studied the customs of the lake with great interest. One slowed the speedboat when approaching canoes or persons fishing. One shouted, "Hi, there!" or waved, to every boat or person one passed. It was permissible to blow a whistle to attract attention, and Waldo explained, without demonstrating, the arrangement of long and short blasts which meant a call for help.

They swerved, turning toward the Erwins' handsome boathouse.

"Clay and Virgie are there—I see them," said Waldo.

"Virgie's wearing a hat and a town suit. They must be going somewhere. Perhaps they won't be able to come for cocktails," said Louella—it seemed to Miss Phipps that she spoke with relief.

"Erwin isn't wearing town clothes," observed Randall.

The contrast between the dress

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of the Erwin pair was certainly marked. Clayton was wearing the typical lake uniform of shorts and T-shirt—of the very finest quality, Miss Phipps observed—while Virginia had a suit of gray corded silk and a little hat to match which, though of the most expensive simplicity, certainly belonged to town.

The Stone speedboat drew up jerkily alongside the dock, for dear Waldo was not the most expert of navigators, thought Miss Phipps; he had not been born to inherited wealth, but had achieved a lake camp recently, the hard way. Miss Phipps saw a look of contempt cross the fair, well-chiseled features of the handsome young Clayton Erwin, and she disliked him on sight.

"Hi, Clay! Hi, Virgie!" cried Waldo, beaming.

"Hi, Waldo," replied Erwin. The deliberate calm and level cadence of these two words had an effect of mockery, and Miss Phipps disliked him even more.

"We came to ask you up for cocktails tomorrow," said Waldo.

"Virginia can't. Her father's ill again," said Erwin.

His slight emphasis on *again* indicated that in his view the health of his wife's father was an unmitigated bore.

"We're just off to see if I can get a seat on the afternoon plane," said Virginia.

Miss Phipps heard in her voice that she was anxious to leave at once. "But to show her anxiety to her husband is a mistake," she thought.

Sure enough, Erwin said promptly, "Oh, there's plenty of time. Come up and have a drink, Waldo —Louella. Oh—and you, Randall." His glance raked Miss Phipps, who had never felt plumper and plainer in her life. The introduction was effected. "I'm afraid I haven't read any of your books," said Erwin with a cold smile.

"I don't believe we've time, Clayton," said Louella, with a glance to Miss Phipps to call her attention to Virginia's unease.

"Oh, come, Louella!" urged Erwin. "Virgie will think she's been inhospitable if you don't stay a while."

The speedboat party disembarked and trailed unhappily up the rocky woodland path to the white camp. Miss Phipps took it slowly for Randall's sake, and Virginia hung back with Miss Phipps.

"Clayton won't have a telephone when he's on vacation, you see," explained Virginia. "We received the telegram about father's illness only yesterday afternoon when we fetched the mail. It was no use trying for a place on the morning plane, Clay thought."

Her voice was wistful. Poor child, thought Miss Phipps, she's a sweet, simple person—she really believes she's been inhospitable. She believes all her husband's gibes. She's desperately unhappy. And

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very beautiful, added Miss Phipps, surveying the wings of dark hair, the lovely gray eyes, the clear fine skin, the delicate profile.

"As a matter of fact," lied Miss Phipps in a loud cheerful voice so as to be overheard by the three in front, "we really mustn't stay long. Both Mr. Randall and myself have manuscripts which must be posted in time to catch the plane. Isn't that so, Mr. Randall?"

"It certainly is," lied the poet promptly.

A faint color tinged Virginia's cheek. She turned. "Hi, Martin," she said.

"Virginia and I are old schoolmates," said Randall quickly. "She and I and Louella come from the same home town."

"Oh, lord, he's in love with her and the riding accident was in some way her fault and he was too proud to take advantage of it and she feels guilty," diagnosed Miss Phipps rapidly.

"The Stones' camp used to be my father's, you see," said Virginia. "Waldo and Louella bought it after—"

"Virginia!" called her husband imperiously.

Virginia hurried meekly ahead.

Louella and Miss Phipps sat on a log outside the neat little white wooden building, in a grassy clearing framed by pines, which to Miss Phipps's delight had proved to be the nearest U.S. Post Office. Randall, who did not relish the mile walk from the foot of the lake down the road, had remained in the speedboat, and Waldo was inside the Post Office. A huge salmon-pink car flashed by; Virginia Erwin waved, her husband lifted a disdainful finger, in greeting.

"Horrid man!" exclaimed Miss Phipps with emphasis.

"You don't have to tell me," agreed Louella.

"Possessive. Wants his wife at his beck and call every moment. I wonder he allows her to go home alone," said Miss Phipps.

"That's how he holds her. They've no children. Through her father's comfort, I mean. Her mother died some time ago. Her father took a financial tumble, and Clayton rescued him—more or less."

"Less rather than more, I should think. Keeps both of them on the end of a chain. Emotional blackmail, I'd call it. Don't let him blackmail you, Louella."

"What makes you think he does?" said Louella quickly, flushing.

"Oh, just a vague indication here and there—it's surprising what an intonation or pause can suggest . . ."

"Waldo has always said how keen your observation is, Phippsy," said Louella drily. She hesitated. "It's really too absurd," she said. "After all, I'm almost old enough to be Clayton's mother."

"But still handsome, Louella,"

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murmured Miss Phipps, glancing admiringly at the charming petite figure and thick blonde curls.

"It was at a party at our camp. I was getting some more liquor from the closet, when Clayton came up behind me and kissed my neck."

"But did that matter so much?" marveled Miss Phipps. "Everyone kisses and calls darling nowadays."

"No, of course it didn't matter," said Louella angrily. "I disliked it because I dislike Clayton Erwin, but I never thought of it again until he began hinting about it, referring to the incident as if it were something important between us."

"Ah, I see," said Miss Phipps thoughtfully. "You didn't tell Waldo."

"Why on earth should I? It wasn't worth telling."

"But with the lapse of time and these continual hints—"

"Waldo," said Louella, busily lighting a cigarette, "in spite of his editorial airs, is basically not very self-confident. He always tends to think of himself as poor and plain."

"Louella," said Miss Phipps earnestly, "tell Waldo tonight."

"No, I won't!" said Louella. "It's too late."

"You're running a foolish and unnecessary risk, Louella."

"On your way, girls," cried Waldo, emerging from the Post Office with a handful of mail. "We've three invitations to deliver before lunch."

The speedboat swerved, straightened, ceased to roar, and drew up rather neatly beside the boat dock of Colonel Merriam, retired. Waldo climbed out and Randall quickly followed.

Instantly pandemonium reigned. Six small children, clad in six life preservers of varied colors, mingled with six golden retrievers, rushed out on the dock. Waldo and Randall almost disappeared in a confusion of yapping and barking, of screaming and laughing, of a flourishing of tails and paws, a waving of small bare arms and a tossing of curly heads.

Suddenly a voice from above boomed out a word of command, unrecognizable by Miss Phipps, but completely efficacious, for the noise ceased at once. Louella and Miss Phipps, somewhat impeded by several friendly dogs who wished to lick their faces, were at length hauled out of the boat and followed Waldo up the path to the camp, Randall trailing behind. The Colonel, tall, broad, gray-haired, neat in slacks and shirt of becomingly pale khaki, met them halfway. Miss Phipps and Randall were introduced.

"Grandchildren," said the Colonel, indicating them with a wave of the hand. "Come for a month. My sons won't be here again till the week-end and my daughters-in-law have gone marketing with my wife. So I'm in charge. Always put 'em all into life preservers right away—safer, you know. Only two of these

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dogs are mine, but my sons have two each. Boo-ya!" he shouted—or at least it sounded like that to Miss Phipps.

The dogs and children sat down at once, and Miss Phipps marveled at the similarity of Colonels of all nations. Drinks began to be administered and invitations issued.

"Glad you've dropped by, Waldo," said the Colonel seriously. "Here's Fritz and Ruth come with an awkward problem. Professor and Mrs. Firbaum, Miss Phipps—lake neighbors."

Professor Firbaum (white-haired, fresh-complexioned, probably a Hitler refugee) and his wife (university lecturer, younger, with a spark in the brown eyes behind her spectacles) reminded Miss Phipps strongly of Professor Baer and Jo March in that childhood classic of Lousia Alcott's, *Little Women Wedded*. As these two characters had always been favorites of Miss Phipps's—indeed, the youthful literary efforts of Jo had helped to confirm Miss Phipps's own ambitions—she listened with great sympathy to their account of their troubles.

The details were somewhat too dependent on local topography for Miss Phipps to grasp completely, but she understood the general problem well enough. Clayton Erwin wished to "buy in" part of the Firbaums' land, which faced his own on the mainland on the opposite side of the lake from the Stones—to protect his view, Erwin said. The Firbaums did not wish to sell any of their smallish holdings. Erwin therefore was causing trouble by throwing doubt on their title to their land. Surveyors had been summoned, and lawyers called in.

"But why protect his view? We do not threaten his view. Our camp can scarcely be seen from his windows. We do not even go often on the lake in a boat. We are not good with the boat," explained the Professor, turning to Miss Phipps.

It occurred to Miss Phipps, and she could see that the thought was present in the minds of the others, that the explosions and roarings involved in the inefficient starting and conduct of an outboard motor boat might well disturb a neighboring island's peace. But what arrogant selfishness on Clayton Erwin's part—to be unable to tolerate an infrequent noise! Just like him, however, thought Miss Phipps.

"Fellow's a damned little dictator," boomed the Colonel. "Thinks he rules the earth because he owns a few bonds. Like to have him under my orders for a day or two. Why don't you and I go into town with Fritz, Waldo, and tell the surveyors' office a few things, hey?"

"Be glad to," said Waldo. "All the same it would be better to tackle Clayton privately and try to get him to call it off. Bound to cost Fritz a lot of money if he has to go to court to establish his title."

"I certainly wish I hadn't asked

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the Erwins for tomorrow," said Louella in distress.

"Might be a good opportunity—I might say a few words to him on Fritz's behalf," said the Colonel, a gleam of battle in his eye.

"He might turn nasty," objected Louella.

"Wouldn't frighten me," boomed the Colonel with obvious enjoyment.

It was agreed to await the result of the Colonel's "few words" before taking any public action.

"We must go—it's late—we still have to call on the Normans," said Louella.

The Normans' camp pleased Miss Phipps greatly, because it was so neat and so obviously homemade. The small house looked exactly like the illustration of the log cabin in the book *From Log Cabin to White House* which Miss Phipps had enjoyed in her teens. A small patch of grass in front was green and well kept. The boat dock, where a canoe and an outboard motorboat were tied up, was clean and new. What Miss Phipps called a nice normal young man, American married-postwar type, was sawing a log by hand on a sawhorse, watched by a healthy-looking ten-year-old boy.

"Hi, Les!" called Waldo.

"Hi, Waldo," replied Leslie Norman. "Come on in."

He put down the saw carefully and came toward the dock. Miss Phipps noted that his tone, though friendly, seemed subdued. Waldo and Louella evidently noted it too, for they spoke together, with the same intent.

"Sorry—no time," said Waldo. "Just dropped by to ask you and Fran to come in for a drink tomorrow about five."

"Is anything wrong, Les? Where's Frances?" said Louella.

"You haven't heard, then? Tom and Ed here were nearly drowned yesterday morning. Canoe overturned."

The four in the speedboat exclaimed their concern.

"Sure were. 'Course they can both swim, and I went after them pretty quick when Ed blew his whistle—he kept his head and blew it fast, I'll say that for him," said Ed's father, ruffling his son's already tangled hair with a proud hand. "But Tom being younger got a bit of a fright, and he isn't feeling so good this morning. So Fran's kept him in bed and she's staying near him."

"Very wise," said Miss Phipps.

Leslie seemed to find this sympathy agreeable, for he relaxed and said, "But come on in," in a more energetic tone.

"But how did it happen, Les?" said Waldo. "I thought your kids were too well trained on the water to turn over a canoe."

"It was that blasted Clayton Erwin!" growled Leslie, suddenly crimson. "He came past the kids in

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his speedboat, far too close and far too fast, and naturally the waves of his boat's wake upset their canoe. Of course," said Leslie, swallowing and clearly making a great effort to be fair, "I don't say he saw it happen. He'd be round the point before the wake reached them. But all the same, I'd like to tell Mr John Clayton Erwin the third just what I think of him."

"You ought to report it to Colonel Merriam as chairman of the Lake Association," suggested Louella.

"Yes, that's the thing to do," urged Waldo. "It was a clear violation of our lake-navigation laws."

"Well," said Leslie doubtfully, "that's what Fran says. But for myself, I'd rather take a poke at that arrogant, condescending—"

"No sense in putting yourself in the wrong, Les," warned Waldo. "Frankly, as an up-and-coming young architect in this neighborhood, you can't afford to make enemies."

"And think of Fran," urged Louella.

"Come round tomorrow and we'll talk it over," said Waldo. "Bring the kids, of course. 'Bye, now!"

" 'Bye now," echoed the young father.

As their boat left the shore Miss Phipps observed that Norman stood looking after them for some time.

"Just tell me, Waldo Stone, what we shall do with Clayton Erwin if he turns up at five tomorrow evening," said Louella.

"We'll turn him over to Phippsy," said Waldo, grinning.

Miss Phipps groaned . . .

A swim, a nap, and a short stroll through the woods filled the afternoon very pleasantly.

"*This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,*" quoted Miss Phipps, gazing up at the towering trees.

"Longfellow!" snorted Randall with derision, while Waldo murmured deprecatingly that the trees were not in fact primeval, but second or third growth.

"Why jeer at Longfellow?" said Miss Phipps. She knew several answers to her question, but wanted to make the young man talk. "Arnold Bennett called him the chief minor poet of the English language."

"What did he know about poetry?" scoffed Randall.

"What do you think of modern English poetry, Mr. Randall?"

"There haven't been any English poets worth mentioning since Shelley and Keats," said Randall, his eyes sparking as he threw out this challenge.

"Wouldn't you include Lord Byron?"

Randall muttered something that Miss Phipps could not make out. The young man was obviously annoyed.

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"Tell me about modern American poetry," said Miss Phipps encouragingly.

At first sulky, Randall presently recovered his spirits and talked enthusiastically.

But the best part of the day proved to be the evening, when in two canoes—Louella and Randall in one, Waldo and Miss Phipps in the other—the party set off to the remoter stretches of the lake in search of deer. The canoes glided silently through the calm water in which the huge trees were mirrored with astonishing exactness; in the twilight hush came a sudden *swish-swish* noise, and a red deer bounded suddenly away into a thicket.

The purpose of the excursion being thus achieved, the canoes turned homeward. They had quite a long way to go, and the moon was silvering the black water before they rounded a point of land and saw the lights of the Stones' camp in the distance.

"This is the Erwins' island," said Miss Phipps, proud of the local knowledge she had acquired in only one day. "Oh, no, it can't be," she added, disappointed. "There are *two* lighted houses."

"It's the Erwins' all right," said Waldo. "The other building is where their butler and cook live. In the old days when Clay's father was alive, they had scads of guests and scads of servants, four or five big guest cabins and huge servants' quarters. Even Erwin can't do that nowadays—he just has a married couple. They've a lot of cabins still on the island, though."

"Don't talk to me about that young man," said Miss Phipps. "He spoils the view."

On Thursday morning Miss Phipps woke late and happy, feeling that she had her new environment well in hand. She was now well acquainted with canoes, speedboats, inboard and outboard motors, boat docks, squirrels, deer, gunshots, beaver, chipmunks, trees, drifting logs, guides, camps, and navigation laws. The day began with the agreeable routine which now seemed familiar. After breakfast Randall decided to work and retired to his cabin; Louella entered into consultation with her elderly housekeeper; Waldo and Miss Phipps were sent down the lake to the nearest small town, to fetch additional liquor for the party.

"That's Les Norman ahead with our local doctor," said Waldo. He put on speed and overtook the Norman outboard, in which an elderly man in more formal clothes than those usually worn by the lake dwellers was sitting rather stiffly. "Hi there, Les! Isn't young Tom feeling well this morning?"

"He's had a very restless night—so Fran wanted the doctor here to have a look at him," said Leslie.

"He has been in shock, and has a cold," said the doctor in a profes-

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sional tone. "But all he needs is slight sedation and the comfort of his mother's presence. Nothing seriously wrong."

"Glad to hear that," said Waldo, roaring away.

On their way back from town Waldo and Miss Phipps called at the little Post Office to collect the mail.

"I was just wondering, Mr. Stone," said the neat young postmistress, "if you would be so kind as to deliver a telegram to Mr. Erwin. He hasn't been in this morning . . . and . . . as it *is* a telegram . . . it might be important."

She blushed; it was clear that, of course, the contents of the telegram were known to her.

"I'll be glad to," said Waldo.

"I suppose Virginia's father has died," said Miss Phipps.

"I guess so. Clay will need to catch the afternoon plane," said Waldo soberly.

"Shall I stay in the boat?" suggested Miss Phipps a little later, as they tied up at the Erwin dock.

"Certainly not," said Waldo. "Clay is a good character-study for you, and as your editor I insist that you give him the full treatment."

Miss Phipps climbed meekly up the path behind him. At the top they were met by a dignified butler, bald, lined, and adipose, who led them into the large airy living room of the Erwin camp.

"Good morning, Pearson," said Waldo.

"Good morning, sir. I regret that Mr. Clayton is not up yet," said Pearson in an accent which revealed his origin.

"You're English—a fellow-countryman," said Miss Phipps.

"Yes, madam," said Pearson, bowing. "I encountered the late Mr. John Clayton Erwin in France in the First World War and have been butler in the family ever since. My wife too is English."

"I hate to interrupt you two at your old-home week," said Waldo, "but I have an urgent telegram for Mr. Erwin."

The butler hesitated. "It is beyond my instructions to waken Mr. Clayton before he summons me," he said.

("He's accustomed to his master lying blotto with a hangover," decided Miss Phipps with malice.)

Waldo exclaimed impatiently and strode toward an inner door.

"Would you care for a little refreshment, madam? A cup of coffee? A pot of tea? My wife would be happy to prepare it," said Pearson.

Miss Phipps was about to decline when she was interrupted by a loud shout from Waldo, who came rushing out to them in obvious terror, his face white.

"Clayton's dead!" he cried.

"Oh, no, sir," said Pearson calmly. "Mr. Clayton often appears somewhat lifeless after a little overindulgence the previous night. Last night, Mrs. Clayton being absent,

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he was a trifle—under the weather, shall I say—when I took him another bottle of whiskey about eleven o'clock."

"Don't be a fool, man," panted Waldo. "His brains are strewn all over the pillow."

The butler, his face a mask of horror, rushed into the bedroom. Miss Phipps followed. Both soon withdrew; the facts were as Waldo had stated them. It was an unpleasant sight.

"He's been murdered!" gasped Pearson.

"What makes you think of murder?" demanded Waldo roughly.

"Mr. Clayton would never kill himself, sir—he likes himself too well. It might have been an accident, perhaps?"

"I don't see how you can have an accident with a deer rifle, while lying horizontally in bed in silk pajamas," said Waldo. "The gun's on the floor at the foot of his bed. Was it his own gun, I wonder? Yes, probably it was," he answered himself, pointing to an empty place in the rack beside the hearth. "Did you hear any shot during the night, Pearson?"

"Not to distinguish from other shots in the woods, sir," stammered Pearson. "There will be fingerprints on the gun, perhaps?"

"I doubt it," said Waldo. "I must ask you, Pearson, to stay here on the island, with your wife, while I go down the lake and notify the police. I shall lock the bedroom door and take the key with me. Don't touch anything."

"Certainly not, sir," said Pearson.

"This dock is under observation, clear if distant, from my camp," continued Waldo, "so any attempt to leave would be instantly noticed."

"I have no desire to leave, sir," said Pearson with dignity.

"Were you attached to your master, Pearson?" asked Miss Phipps.

The butler hesitated. "Mr. Clayton was very charming as a little boy," he said. "After his father died and he inherited so much wealth, he became spoiled. Of late years my wife and I would, I own, have been glad to leave his service, but we should have found it difficult to obtain fresh suitable posts at our age. We are very fond of Mrs. Clayton," he added wistfully.

"I feel this is all wrong, Phippsy," said Waldo as they hurried down the path. "I oughtn't to leave the body, I oughtn't to leave the Pearsons alone. But you can't drive the boat, so I can't stay there myself, and I don't fancy leaving you there alone with the Pearsons. Suppose one of them is the murderer? Not that I think it likely—what the old chap said about the difficulty of finding a new place at his age is true enough, so why should he kill off his present employer?"

"How old is his wife?" inquired Miss Phipps.

"Every month as old as he is," said Waldo, casting off, "and plain-

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er if possible. Erwin hasn't been playing round with her, if that's in your mind. Now if their daughter had been living here—but she hasn't; she married years ago and went to California. And their son is in England—married and stayed there after the war. No, I can't see either of the Pearsons firing a bullet into Erwin's head. But who else could it have been? This is an island, you know—a murderer can't just drop in and out . . . I think I'd better take you back to our camp, Phippsy, before I go for the police—I may be hours with them."

The roaring of the engine made further conversation difficult.

"How far is your camp from Erwin's, Waldo?" shouted Miss Phipps.

"About two miles," shouted Waldo.

When they approached the Stone camp, they saw Louella at the window, with Randall at her side, both waving to them cheerfully. Waldo cut off the engine.

"This is going to be a very unpleasant affair, Phippsy," said Waldo. "So many people round the lake have reason to dislike Clayton Erwin. The police will ferret everything out. It will be a mess."

"Still, as you say, the Erwins' camp is on an island," said Miss Phipps.

Waldo glanced at her sharply. "If you have any bright ideas about solving the murder, Phippsy," he said, "produce them—and fast!"

"I think I know who the murderer is," said Miss Phipps thoughtfully.

"What!" barked Waldo.

"Only there are one or two details I should like to check first."

She outlined her plan.

"Well, okay, why not?" said Waldo. "What do we have to lose?"

Miss Phipps, leaning forward, surreptitiously took possession of the whistle which lay in the dashboard compartment.

The murderer paddled the canoe toward the Erwin camp.

"Though I don't see what we're going to do when we get there."

"Neither do I," said Miss Phipps thoughtfully. "I don't think the Pearsons murdered Clayton Erwin, do you? No motive."

"They had a strong motive *not* to do so," said the murderer emphatically. "Besides, to point a gun at a man's head from a yard away, and fire, takes more nerve than an old fellow like Pearson is likely to have."

("The usual pathological conceit of the criminal showing its ugly head," thought Miss Phipps. "He means: 'Pearson couldn't but *I* could'.")

Aloud she said, "He was a soldier once."

"Forty years ago."

"We acquit the Pearsons then, do we? Although they did have the best opportunity . . . Perhaps it would be well to consider all the

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suspects under the headings of motive and opportunity?"

"It would be better," said the murderer, "to leave it all to the police."

"I'm hoping to clear up the case before the police arrive," said Miss Phipps. The murderer gave her a sudden grim look, and she continued rather nervously, "The people with motives are Louella, the Firbaums, the Normans, Randall, old Ben. Of these, the motives of the Normans and Ben belong to the past; the murder, if committed by them, would spring from revenge for wrongs already inflicted. Now old Ben, I think, has had his revenge: I think it was he who reported Clayton Erwin to the authorities, resulting in the hunting license having been revoked."

"Your analysis so far is excellent," said the murderer. "I agree."

"As for Leslie Norman, it's true he expressed a desire for revenge on Erwin. But he had no opportunity, I think. The boy Tom had a restless night—a statement confirmed by the doctor who had heard the child's own account—so the Normans must have been up several times during the night to comfort him. Therefore, Leslie Norman could not have slipped away to murder Erwin without his departure being noticed. Of course the whole question of opportunity is a very difficult one," said Miss Phipps. "The Erwins' camp being an island, you know."

"You are omitting Colonel Merriam from consideration?" said the murderer.

"I acquit Colonel Merriam on grounds of character, and his sons because they were absent," she said. "His wife and daughters-in-law of course I haven't met. But I acquit the whole family from lack of opportunity. Imagine any murderer trying to slip away quietly in the night from that camp! Those dogs! Whoever tried to leave or return, at least four of them would bark their heads off! The Colonel's command to stop them is a pretty loud bark too."

"True," said the murderer.

"As for Louella," began Miss Phipps.

"Louella surely has no motive."

"I'm afraid she has," said Miss Phipps soberly. "But, I am glad to say, no opportunity. If she had tried to start a motor at our camp, we should all have been wakened by the noise. As for a canoe—the two canoes are on stands and they make a grating noise when pulled across the dock. I doubt, too, if Louella has the strength to launch one. Yes, it is this question of transport which is decisive," she continued. "Consider the Firbaums, for example. Their motive is clear. But they are 'not good with the boat,' you remember? Can you imagine either of them making their way *quietly* across the lake in the dark? Their motive rests on Erwin's objection to the noise they make when they

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attempt to boat. Yes, the question of transport is, I repeat, decisive."

"How did the murderer reach the Erwins' island, then?"

"He swam. I woke up early on Wednesday morning and saw damp footprints, pointing inwards to the camp, on the Stones' dock. The sun had not yet risen to dry them."

"But Erwin was alive later that Wednesday morning—we all saw him."

"Quite. Wednesday's swimming performance was your *rehearsal.* For some date when you hoped Virginia would be safely absent—for you love Virginia, don't you? I didn't realize the significance of the footprints on the dock at the time, of course."

"What first put you on to me?" asked the murderer.

"It was a matter of literary history, my dear Randall," said Miss Phipps. "You were so sensitive about Lord Byron yesterday afternoon. Byron was a poet, like you, and lame, like you. Because other sports were closed to him he made himself into an exceptionally strong swimmer. So did you—I noticed when I first saw you at the dock that your bathing suit bore the insignia of an athletic club. Byron swam the Hellespont, you remember—the strait between Asia Minor and Europe, the one Leander swam in classical times to see his girl—about four miles."

"I get your point, and I'm sorry," began Randall, "because as it is—"

"That's the trouble, you see," said Miss Phipps sorrowfully, shaking her head. "One murder so often leads to another. I felt some sympathy for you about the first. I must warn you that I'm wearing a lifejacket," she added hastily.

"That won't help you any after a hard crack on the head with this paddle."

"A dangerous drifting log? I see. But my body will float."

"Not after my well-meant but futile attempts at rescue."

Miss Phipps plucked the whistle from her capacious bosom and blew three loud blasts. At the Stones' dock the speedboat started with a roar.

Randall was silent, then he said with surprising calm, "You win, Miss Phipps." He sprang up, tilting the canoe, and threw himself into the lake. "Give my love to Virginia," he said.

He disappeared from view and did not rise again.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **MARTIN IVORY**

TITLE: ***The King of Mail Order Mystery***

TYPE: Crime and Detection

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *You couldn't call the ex-crime reporter's scheme a racket—he gave full value for each two bucks; but he never thought of his name as Frankenstein . . .*

THUNDER RUMBLED AS RAIN poured down on the street of dusty shops and old commercial buildings near the heart of a large city.

Inside the little bar and grill Sam Bright handed Tony a dollar bill.

"One beer," he said. "And gimme the change in dimes."

Tony banged the cash register. He slapped the coins onto the bar.

"You," Tony said, "are gonna call some more nuts. Right?"

"Don't disparage my customers," Sam replied. "Anyhow, it's a perfect night for homicide. I'll be right back."

Chuckling, Sam picked up the coins. A short plump man over forty, he crossed the room and squeezed into a telephone booth. He pulled a list from his pocket, consulted it, then dropped a dime into the slot.

He dialed a number and waited. After four rings an elderly woman answered.

"Hello?"

"Is this," Sam asked in a deep stage-voice, "Miss Louise Hathaway?"

"It is. But who . . ."

"I," Sam announced slowly, "am The Fiend."

"Who?"

"The Fiend, Madam—the murderer of Cedric Callahan."

"Oh," the woman gasped. "Oh, how exciting!"

"I have learned," Sam went on, "that you are endeavoring to solve the case, and to reveal my identity. I warn you—desist! If you continue to interfere in my affairs, I'll

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stalk you as I did Callahan. And I'll kill you the same way—by plunging a knife into your back." He paused. Then he added, "Heh, heh, heh."

"Thank you!" the woman exclaimed.

"You're welcome," Sam said, and hung up.

He gazed at the list again, scratched his large red nose, and reached for another coin.

Tony observed, "It beats me how anyone can make a living with the dodge you're working."

"You have no imagination," Sam declared. His calls completed, he drained a glass of beer and lit a cigar. "And besides, you're not lonely."

"I got a wife and seven kids," Tony said defensively. "How can I be lonely?"

"Exactly. If you saw my advertisement, *you* wouldn't be interested. But lonely people, seeking a temporary escape from the commonplace—they *are* interested." Sam pulled a proof of his ad from his pocket and waved it in front of Tony. "It runs now in sixteen little magazines, perused by little people. Under *Classified—Personal.* I never change the wording. It says: *Match wits with The Fiend, arch-criminal of all time. Send $2 and your address and phone number to Murder-By-Mail, Box 313, for police report and clue kit, giving you all you need to deduce The Fiend's identity. In addition, you'll get a threatening phone call from The Fiend himself. Correct solution will be mailed two weeks later.*"

"People answer that?"

"By the thousands. I've made more money in the last four months than I ever earned in any one year I was covering the police beat for the *Express.* Today I ordered the printers to knock off another batch of police reports and solutions. I'll need more clue kits soon, too."

"Whaddya do," Tony asked, "if the people who answer your ad are from out of town? Do you make the threatening calls long-distance?"

"Hardly. I've got a network of Fiends all over the country. Shut-ins, retired folks, and the like—they all get a big kick out of it. I make a lot of the local calls myself, though, to cut down the overhead."

Tony leaned over the bar. He asked, "Confidentially, Sam, who *did* kill Cedric Callahan?"

"For two dollars I'll sell you the whole package."

"I've already seen the police report," Tony said. "I watched you sit there and write it, remember? It was a spooky night just like this. And you showed me the clue kit when you got the first one from the novelty company. The tiny plastic dagger and the phony cigarette butt and all—it couldn't cost you more than a dime for the works."

"To be precise, four cents each, wholesale."

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"Okay. So I know how Cedric Callahan was found murdered in a locked room in his penthouse apartment, this knife sticking out of his back. How Callahan was killed because for years he'd been trying to uncover the identity of The Fiend, the arch-criminal who directs an international murder ring. What I wanna know now is—who murdered Callahan? Who's The Fiend? And if you tell me, I'll give you a beer on the house."

Sam considered this. "Very well," he decided. "Because I like you, I'll accept your offer. The murderer—The Fiend—is Inspector Clagg. The man who signed the police report. That's the best gimmick of all, you know—to pin the crime on the police official supposedly investigating it. Nobody catches on to that one. And if you'd read Clagg's report carefully, you'd have noted that he gives himself away in the second paragraph, when he says—"

"Aw, baloney," Tony interrupted. He opened another beer bottle and set it on the bar. "I figured it was Clagg all the time. Because all the suspects were *too* suspicious. By the way, did that man find you?"

"What man?"

"The weird one who was in here yesterday. Asking about where you lived, and all."

"No," Sam said thoughtfully. "He didn't find me."

Tony said, "He sure seemed anxious to locate you."

"What'd he look like? My secretary said a man's been hanging around our building all morning, looking up at our window. I never saw him, though."

"He was a big guy. I couldn't make out his face too good. He wore dark glasses, even in here. His voice was real low, almost like he was disguising it. He wore a black topcoat and a floppy old hat." Tony paused. "As a matter of fact, Sam, he looked a lot like the way you describe The Fiend."

Sam closed his umbrella and dashed rain out of his hat. Howard, the hotel desk clerk, looked up with a grin. He pulled Sam's mail down from its box.

"I guess you get a lot more than that," Howard said, nodding at the two envelopes, "at your office."

"I sure do." Sam shoved the envelopes into a pocket. "More than fifty pieces today alone. And each with two dollars."

"What'll you do when business falls off? After all, there are just so many people who want to solve mysteries by mail. And you can't get repeat business, because your old customers will know the identity of The Fiend."

"I haven't run out of new customers so far," Sam replied. "But I've got even bigger plans for when I do. And I'll have the names of my old customers, people willing to bcy dreams for two dollars by mail, to start off with. I'll invent more

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mysteries. I may even go beyond that. Incidentally . . ."

"Yes, sir?"

"Has anyone been around lately? I mean, looking for me?"

"As a matter of fact," Howard said, "a man was here just an hour ago. A big man, with dark glasses and a slouch hat. Funny about the dark glasses, too, with it raining so hard and it being night outside anyway. I guess his eyes must be bad."

"What else about this man?"

"I told him you were still out—that you usually stopped for a beer and then ate dinner somewhere before coming home. He didn't leave his name, but he said I should tell you he'd be back."

"Thanks," Sam said. "If this guy shows up again, don't let him up to my room until I've had a chance to talk to him on the housephone."

Sam rode the self-service elevator to the fourth floor and trudged down the hall to his apartment. The man at the end of the corridor was watching a TV Western again, and the couple across the way had started another loud argument.

Sam unlocked his door. He put the umbrella in a corner and removed his rubbers. He hung his raincoat over the bathtub and pulled off his suit coat. Then after loosening his tie and rolling up his sleeves, he sat down and opened one of the two envelopes Howard had given him.

The telephone rang. Sam reached for the receiver at his elbow.

"Sam Bright, here. Who's this?"

A pause. And then a deep voice said, "I am—The Fiend."

"Who is this?" Sam repeated, annoyed. "Stop playing games. I'm not in the mood."

"I really *am* The Fiend. Your own creation come to life. And I'm going to stalk you. And kill you. You'll die the same way Cedric Callahan did—with a knife in your back."

"Look, pal . . ."

"Heh, heh, heh."

Then the line went dead.

Sam gazed numbly at the telephone. He blinked. He depressed the hook, then raised it again.

"Yes, sir?" Howard inquired.

"That call I received. It came from outside didn't it?"

"Yes, it did."

"I see." Sam paused. "Howard, get the local police precinct."

"Anything wrong?"

"No, no. I just want to talk to some of my old pals there."

The dial tone sounded. A few moments later a familiar voice chanted, "Ninth Precinct. Sergeant Casey . . ."

"Pat, this is Sam Bright."

"Sammy!" The sergeant's grin was almost audible over the wire. "This place hasn't been the same since you quit the *Express* and started that crazy mail order business. Your replacement is dumb. Why don't you visit us more often?"

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"I'll be around," Sam said. "You fellas all get the clue kits and the police reports I promised? My secretary said they went out a couple of weeks ago."

"We did, indeed, and thanks. The solutions came yesterday. And out of the whole precinct, you know what? Only two guys pegged Inspector Clagg as The Fiend. We all had a lot of fun out of it, though. And those phone calls—phew! My brother got mine by mistake—you asked for 'Mr. Casey' and my brother thought the call was for him. It nearly scared him to death."

"I was kind of busy then," Sam said, "so I farmed those calls out to a cub reporter who needed some extra cash. Otherwise, I'd have known by the voice it wasn't you. Say, who's in charge tonight?"

"Sully. He just came on."

"Let me talk to him."

Casey transferred the call.

"Lieutenant Sullivan."

"Sully? Sam Bright."

"Hello, Sam," Sullivan drawled cordially. "Still getting rich on the Cedric Callahan murder case?"

"Everything's going fine," Sam said. "But Sully—something unusual has come up."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you got my phony police report and the clue kit and all, didn't you? When the other guys did?"

"Sure. And *I* thought it was that sneaky butler . . ."

"Yeah. Well, this arch-villain, The Fiend, who's really Inspector Clagg in disguise—I describe him as a tall man, wearing a black coat, a floppy slouch hat, and dark glasses."

"I remember."

"Sully, this sounds crazy, but a guy dressed in just such an outfit has been skulking around *me* the last day or so. I haven't seen him, but three other people have—my secretary, a bartender in a place where I hang out, and the night clerk at my apartment hotel here. This guy was in the hotel asking for me about an hour ago. And he said he was coming back."

"Anything else?" Lieutenant Sullivan's voice had become serious.

"Yes, and that's why I called you. I just got a phone call from someone claiming to be The Fiend. He said he was my creation come to life. And that he intends to kill me." Sam hesitated. "Now that I've told you about it, I realize how silly it sounds. I knew a lot of screwballs when I was in the newspaper business. One of them is probably working a practical joke . . ."

"Sam," the Lieutenant said thoughtfully, "I wouldn't dismiss it as a joke so quickly if I were you."

"You think it's on the level?"

"It *could* be. At any rate, it's worth looking into. I'm glad you had enough sense to call."

"But why," Sam wondered, "would anyone want to murder *me?* And posing as The Fiend? It doesn't make sense. Unless one of

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those part-time Fiends I hired to make phone calls has gone off his rocker and is trying to live the role . . ."

"That's one possibility," Sullivan said, "but I think it's fairly remote. There's another one, though, that may *not* be so remote."

"What's that?"

Sullivan paused. Then he said in an even more serious voice, "Sam, has it ever occurred to you that those threatening telephone calls of yours are potentially dangerous?"

"I don't follow you," Sam said. "The calls are the wrinkle that made Murder-By-Mail go over. They give my customers a feeling of participation, a thrill they'd never get just by opening envelopes. And they have the time of their lives, sitting in their little rooms and apartments waiting for the call, wondering what The Fiend is going to say. For two bucks, they're amused for a whole week—we don't place the calls until a week after they get their police reports and clue kits."

"But suppose," Sullivan said, "that through some mix-up the call went to the wrong person? Casey's brother got *his* call by mistake, you know. Some of us down here—well, frankly, we've been talking about it—about what would happen if your threat from The Fiend was received by mistake by some very old person, with a weak heart, maybe. Here's this odd, scary voice on the phone, threatening to stalk you and shove a knife into your back. That would be enough, you know, to induce a fright that might kill someone."

"I see what you mean. I never thought of that."

"It could be," Sullivan went on, "that this actually happened somewhere. And that a relative of the person who died traced that call back to the man who invented Murder-By-Mail—namely, you. And now this relative wants to murder you in what he thinks is the most appropriate way possible—by posing as The Fiend and sticking a knife into *your* back, after scaring the daylights out of you first."

"That's absolutely insane!"

"Perhaps. But you saw things just as screwy when you were covering this precinct for the *Express*. So I'll tell you what. We won't take any chances. Bolt your door and draw the blinds. Don't let anyone into your apartment who isn't known to you personally—not until we search your hotel and the neighborhood. We'll set up a stakeout—for at least tonight. And tomorrow, you give us a list of every Murder-By-Mail customer. It'll be a tough job, but we'll check out every name on that list. We'll see if any recent deaths in those families could have been caused by a telephone call from The Fiend."

Sam lit a cigar. Muttering angrily, he rose and paced the room.

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In the distance a siren wailed. Then, several blocks away, it stopped. If a man in a black coat and slouch hat were lurking outside the hotel, Sullivan and his men would want to take him by surprise.

Sam sat down. He stubbed out the cigar.

After a while the telephone rang.

"Sam?" It was Lientenant Sullivan. "I'm in the lobby. Everything all right?"

"So far, so good," Sam said. "I'm in four-oh-nine."

Sam hung up. He rose and paced some more.

The man at the end of the hall was still watching a Western, the volume of his television set at its peak. And the couple across the way were arguing more vehemently than ever.

Someone knocked on Sam's door.

Eagerly, Sam released the bolt and stood back.

The door opened.

The man on the threshhold wore a black coat, slouch hat, and dark glasses. He grinned.

Frantically, Sam tried to slam the door.

But the man was too quick. He pushed, and Sam fell backward.

The man stepped inside. He bolted the door and turned.

Sam got to his knees.

"Sully. My God, *Sully* . . ."

"Yes." Lieutenant Sullivan tipped the brim of his slouch hat. He removed the dark glasses and put them into a pocket. "I," he added, "am The Fiend."

"It's a joke," Sam said. "It must be!" He got up and walked unsteadily to a chair, where he flopped. "You guys at the precinct —you decided to play a joke on me, didn't you?"

"It's no joke," Sullivan said, coming closer. "I'm going to execute you. For extreme criminal negligence."

"What are you talking about?"

"You know what happened," the policeman asked, "when your part-time Fiend made the call to my house? My ten-year-old son took the call. His name was James Sullivan, too, and your Fiend didn't know the difference. I imagine plenty of kids send in their two bucks, just like grownups. Most kids would love getting a threatening phone call—if they knew it was coming and that it was all in fun. But my kid didn't know it was coming. He'd just returned from another stay in the hospital. He's suffered from a serious heart condition since infancy. But he might have lived a long time—if The Fiend hadn't called him up and threatened to plunge a knife into his back. And scared him so much that he died less than an hour later. I never told anyone what caused his death. But Jimmy told me about The Fiend, just before the end."

"Sully," Sam began, "I admit now it was a mistake. I didn't think

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my idea through. But all I wanted was to give lonely people a little *fun* . . ."

"There's nothing to discuss." Sullivan drew a knife from his coat. "Sergeant Casey thinks I'm out making a spot check of the squads. All I told him about you was, you'd been threatened and wanted to talk to some detectives about it tomorrow. But I figured you'd call the precinct tonight, after I let myself be seen in this Fiend outfit and then made the threatening call to you. I parked in an alley near here, where I changed into the Fiend suit again. I looked this way when the clerk downstairs saw me just now—I'd come back, just as I promised. And I'll be dressed this way when I leave. Anyhow," Sullivan went on, reaching for Sam, "I'll be in charge of the investigation into your murder. And nobody will ever suspect the detective—you said so yourself."

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Bier, Jesse	TRIAL AT BANNOCK	Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.	$5.95	2/13/63
Broun, Daniel	THE SUBJECT OF HARRY EGYPT	Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.	3.50	2/4/63
Chaber, M. E.	SOFTLY IN THE NIGHT	Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.	3.50	2/11/63
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Dean, Amber	DEADLY CONTACT	Doubleday & Company, Inc.	3.50	2/1/63
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Martin, Shane	MOURNERS' VOYAGE	Doubleday & Company, Inc.	3.50	2/1/63
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Whitney, Phyllis A.	SEVEN TEARS FOR APOLLO	Appleton-Century-Crofts	4.95	2/11/63

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE PAPERBACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Aarons, Edward S.	ASSIGNMENT SORRENTO SIREN	Gold Medal	35¢	1/31/63
Ford, Leslie	DATE WITH DEATH	Popular Library	40¢	2/19/63
Hasty, John E.	SOME MISCHIEF STILL	Gold Medal	35¢	1/31/63
Prather, Richard S.	ALWAYS LEAVE 'EM DYING	Gold Medal	35¢	1/31/63
Prather, Richard S.	OVER HER DEAR BODY	Gold Medal	40¢	1/31/63
Wormser, Richard	A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU	Gold Medal	35¢	1/31/63

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**GEORGE HARMON COXE**
TITLE:	***The Simplicity of the Act***
TYPE:	Crime and Detection
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Perhaps the moral of this little story is: literary collaboration is a very dangerous business . . . Writers, beware!*

VANCE CLUNG TO THE BOTTLE AS he scurried before the chill wind, across the blackness to the rickety penthouse that stood like a cracker box atop a raft.

Caldwell was at his desk, a sheaf of yellow copy paper in his hand, and Vance put on a grin as he advanced with the bottle.

"That the third act?"

Caldwell nodded, one eye on the bottle. "What did you think of the rest of it?"

"If the third is as good, you've got a smash, kid. Open this and get some glasses."

"Sure," Caldwell said, "I'll drink with you."

Vance, standing at the desk, moved the instant Caldwell disappeared in the kitchen. It took a moment to open a drawer, drop a handkerchief over the small-caliber automatic there and pocket it, his eyes touching the manuscript and the stack of unpaid bills on the desk as he straightened. He was smiling and at ease as Caldwell poured the drinks and added water, but he could tell even then that something was wrong and was glad his plan had been made in time.

"Four days it took me," Caldwell said. He sat down and made himself another drink, his grin mirthless and the stamp of weariness on his blond face. "Thanks to you."

"Me?"

"I didn't know until then how much you hated me, nor how long you'd kidded me along. Because of Margaret, wasn't it?"

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Vance tried to control his facial muscles, to look surprised and hurt. *Yes, you stupid fool,* he thought, and knew that there had been a hate of sorts even before Margaret —even when their first successful collaboration took them to Hollywood. Jim Caldwell, with his country-boy manners and stupid gullibility, and his facile way of writing.

Vance had tolerated Caldwell then because he needed him, always contemptuous of his innocence and jealous of his talent as he made him believe that it was he, Vance, who knew construction and technique. When Margaret, a bit player then, had rejected him for Caldwell—

"Are you crazy?" he said.

Caldwell picked up the stack of bills, grunting softly. "You're good, old man. I've got to hand it to you, kidding me into thinking *you* were the one who was broke. Hitting me for a touch as often as you dared. Rent money I had to borrow for you, charge accounts I couldn't pay. This one's my eviction notice—I've got until the first."

He waved a hand, and Vance followed it, seeing the wallboard interior that Caldwell had put up himself to help reduce the rent, the desk with its telephone and its battered old typewriter.

"You've been talking about me for quite a while, haven't you, Vance? Just a word here and there where it would start the creditors yammering. Poor old Caldwell! Washed up, finished, written out."

"You're out of your mind." Vance made the smile come again to cover his wrath. "Why, we've been together five years—"

"Sure." Caldwell stuffed the bills into an inside pocket and drank again. "I didn't believe it, either, when I found out what you'd been doing. And then I saw the reason. You held back your own dough and kept sponging, working me deeper into debt, figuring Margaret would divorce me when you had me on the ropes." He laughed abruptly. "When we had our scrap a year ago, who kept harping about my pride and independence? Who insisted I had to leave her until I'd proved myself again? Oh, you're good, all right. As good as I was dumb. I asserted myself. I left her to work with you—and this is what it got me."

He pulled out a telegram and tossed it on the desk. Vance had seen it before—had counted on it: a wire from Simonds, their agent, saying that a revise of an old story had proved a bust.

"Well, thanks for everything, pal. I'm writing my own stuff now. I just wanted you to be the first to read it." Caldwell put down his glass. "I'm broke, all right; but I've enough to eat while I revise it and get it copied, enough to air-mail a copy out to Simonds. After that I won't need money. Go ahead and read it."

"With you heckling me?" Vance rose. "Stop acting like a freshman.

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I'll be back after I've read it. Maybe I'll bring a doctor. You're beginning to sound like a paranoiac."

With the need for pretense past, he was not aware of the chill blast that struck him as he crossed the roof, but only of the bitter hate inside him.

It had been hard, putting on the act for Caldwell when what he wanted to do was use the gun. Because everything Caldwell said was true. He had known of Margaret's contempt for failure, but his campaign to break the man had not reckoned with the odd streak of loyalty that held her to Caldwell when he was down.

Vance went, now, to his own third-floor apartment, where he could examine the gun and go over the details of his plan. He had known what he had to do when he read the first act of Caldwell's three nights ago. With such a play, Caldwell would not only have success again, but Margaret as well. Then he, Vance, would have nothing, not even hope. This way—well, one hit was all he needed. Margaret still liked him; he knew that. She'd take her husband's suicide as an acknowledgment of failure, as would everyone else.

The thought of a future writing Margaret's pictures for her made a pleasing picture to Vance. He dwelt on it fondly until he heard the young couple next door come back from the movies; then he smiled and went into the bedroom.

Last night he had been playing the table radio when the young husband—Ward, his name was—had the nerve to pound on the wall for silence. Not until then did Vance realize how paper-thin the walls were; not until then did the last fragment of his plan fall into place. Now he moved the telephone table close to the partition and waited, his ear to the panel.

Somewhere in his chest a nerve began to jump. He could feel the dryness in his throat. Presently he wanted to yell at them to hurry up, to come into their bedroom and listen to what he had to say.

Then, as he fought for self-control, he heard them moving about, and quickly lifted the telephone.

Dialing his own number with an unsteady finger, he hung up softly. Almost at once the bell rang, startling him and tearing at his nerve ends. He made himself wait through the ensuing silence for the second jangling ring; then lifted the instrument and began to talk loudly, leaning close to the wall.

"Yeah . . . What?" He let his voice rip out. *"No . . . Jim! No, for God's sake, Jim! Wait . . . Don't shoot!"*

He hung up, knocked over a chair on purpose, and ran through the living room, realizing now that all tension had gone from him and that no longer was he shaking and uncertain.

He heard a door open as he raced for the stairs, and from the corner

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of his eye saw the white startled faces of the Wards. They had heard him, all right. And the rest of it was simple.

He, Vance, had no apparent motive for murder. But Caldwell's motives for suicide were pointed and unmistakable. His own gun, the telltale eviction notice, the telegram of rejection on that old script . . .

Caldwell was still at his desk. Vance walked straight to him, his grin fixed and colorless, and then, not saying a word, pulled out the gun, leaned over, and put it against the hardness of Caldwell's chest.

The report of the little gun was muted, harmless-sounding. He felt the slap of recoil, saw Caldwell's torso jerk slightly, the look of surprise in his eyes. Then, even as Caldwell slumped forward, Vance was wiping off the gun, amazed at the simplicity of the act.

He felt for limp fingers, imprinted them on the gun, which he left on the desk—a man shooting himself in the heart would use his thumb on the trigger and therefore could not cling to a gun—and knew his job was done. Call the police and while they were on their way, destroy the carbon copy of the script. That was all . . .

Lieutenant Myers stood over the still figure that now lay on the sofa and watched the ambulance surgeon work beside it.

"Hang on," the doctor said. "I'll have the slug in a second." He made a deft twisting motion with his forceps, flicking the bullet out on a piece of cotton.

"Now," he said; and slapped on an emergency dressing so that Caldwell could sit up. "Knocked you out, but it didn't penetrate more'n a half inch," he said. "Thanks to these. Boy, are you lucky!"

Caldwell's face was white and set as he took the stack of unpaid bills that had been in his shirt pocket next to his heart and inspected curiously the jagged, matted hole.

"So's the other guy lucky," Myers said. "Lucky, when we pick him up, it won't be for murder. He had a sweet plan. The suicide phone call he faked was a darb. Only when he got up here he found out he'd trapped himself. When he saw this phone was out of order he knew we'd know the call never could've been made. So the whole thing blew up in his face and he had to run. The Wards saw him and called us."

"It wasn't out of order," Caldwell said shakily, and glanced at the topmost bill in his hand—a form statement from the telephone company saying that, due to the unpaid balance, service was being discontinued. "Vance can thank himself for that one."

"And, brother, it's a good thing you had a stack of 'em," the doctor said.

Caldwell sat quite still, a faraway look in his eyes. "Yeah," he said finally. "It's funny, but I guess I'll have to thank Vance for those, too."

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**AGATHA CHRISTIE**
TITLE:	***The Man on the Chancel Steps***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Miss Jane Marple
LOCALE:	England
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Believe it or not, our old friend Miss Marple gets herself involved in a modern Arabian Nights' adventure that happens in, of all places, Chipping Cleghorn!*

THE VICAR'S WIFE CAME ROUND the corner of the Vicarage with her arms full of chrysanthemums. A good deal of rich garden soil was attached to her strong brogue shoes and a few fragments of earth were adhering to her nose, but of that latter fact she was perfectly unconscious.

She had a slight struggle opening the Vicarage gate which hung, rustily, half off its hinges. Some of the chrysanthemums fell to the ground. Mrs. Harmon bent to retrieve them with an ejaculation which was not quite in keeping with Vicarage standards. A puff of wind caught at her battered felt hat, causing it to sit even more rakishly than it had before. "Bother!" said Bunch, toning down her language.

Christened by her optimistic parents "Diana," Mrs. Harmon had become "Bunch" at an early age for somewhat obvious reasons, and the name had stuck to her ever since. Retrieving the chrysanthemums, she made her way through the lich-gate to the churchyard, and so into the church.

"Br-r-r-rh!" said Bunch. "I'd better get on with this quickly. I don't want to die of cold."

With the quickness born of practice she collected vases, water, flower holders. I wish we had lilies, she

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thought. I get so tired of these scraggy chrysanthemums.

Her nimble fingers arranged the blooms in their holders. There was nothing particularly original or artistic about the decorations, for Bunch Harmon herself was neither original nor artistic, but it was a homely and pleasant arrangement. Carrying the vases carefully, Bunch stepped up the aisle and made her way toward the altar.

As she did so, the sun came out. It shone through the east window of crude, colored glass, mostly blue and red—the gift of a wealthy Victorian churchgoer. The effect was almost startling in its sudden oriental opulence. Like jewels, thought Bunch. Suddenly she stopped, staring ahead of her.

On the chancel steps was a huddled dark form.

Carefully putting down the flowers, Bunch went up to it and bent over it. Just for a moment she thought it might be an old coat or a bundle of clothes, but she now saw that her first impression had been correct.

It was a man lying there, huddled over on himself.

Bunch knelt down by him and slowly, carefully turned him over. For a moment she had thought that he was dead, but she realized now that he was still alive. Her fingers went to his pulse—a pulse so feeble and fluttering that it told its own story, as did the almost greenish pallor of his face.

There was no doubt that the man was dying.

He was about 45, dressed in a dark shabby suit. She laid down the limp hand she had picked up and looked at his other hand. This was clenched like a fist on his breast, the fingers closed over what seemed to be a large wad or handkerchief. All round the clenched hand there were splashes of a brown fluid which, Bunch guessed, was dry blood. She sat back on her heels, frowning, as she wondered in her usual slow, common-sense way what was the best thing to do.

Up till now the man's eyes had been closed, but at this point they suddenly opened and fixed themselves on Bunch's face. They were neither dazed nor wandering. They seemed fully alive and intelligent. His lips moved and Bunch bent forward to catch the words, or rather the word. It was only one word that he said. "Sanctuary."

There was, she thought, just a very faint smile as he breathed out this word. There was no mistaking it, for after a moment he said it again. "Sanctuary."

Then, with a faint sigh, he closed his eyes. Once more Bunch's fingers went to his pulse. It was fainter now and more intermittent. She got up with decision.

"Don't move," she said, "or try to move. I'm going for help."

The man's eyes opened again, but he seemed now to be fixing his attention on the colored light that

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came through the east window. He murmured something that Bunch could not quite catch. She thought, startled, that it might have been her husband's name.

"Julian?" she said. "Did you come here to find Julian?"

But there was no answer. The man lay with eyes closed, his breathing coming in slow, shallow fashion.

Bunch turned and left the church rapidly. She glanced at her watch and nodded with some satisfaction. Dr. Griffiths would still be in his surgery. It was only a couple of minutes' walk from the church. She went in, without waiting to knock or ring, passing through the waiting room and into the doctor's surgery.

"You must come at once," said Bunch breathlessly. "There's a man dying in the church."

Some minutes later, Dr. Griffiths rose from his knees after a brief examination.

"Can we move him from here into the Vicarage? I can attend to him better there—not that it's any use."

"Of course," said Bunch. "I'll go and get things ready. I'll get Harper and Jones, shall I? To help you carry him."

"Thanks. I can telephone from the Vicarage for an ambulance, but I'm afraid—by the time it comes . . ."

Bunch said, "Internal bleeding?"

Dr. Griffiths nodded. "How on earth did he come here?"

It was about five minutes later when Dr. Griffiths put down the telephone receiver and came back into the morning room where the injured man was lying on quickly arranged blankets on the sofa. Bunch was moving a basin of water and clearing up after the doctor's examination.

"Well, that's that," said Griffiths. "I've sent for an ambulance and I've notified the police." He stood, frowning down on the patient who lay with closed eyes. His left hand was plucking in a nervous, spasmodic way at his side.

"He was shot," said Griffiths. "Shot at fairly close quarters. He rolled up his handkerchief into a ball and plugged the wound with it to stop the bleeding."

"Could he have gone far after that happened?" Bunch asked.

"Oh, yes, it's quite possible. A mortally wounded man has been known to pick himself up and walk along a street as though nothing had happened, and then suddenly collapse five or ten minutes later. So he needn't have been shot in the church. Oh, no. He may have been shot some distance away. Of course, he may have shot himself and then dropped the revolver and staggered blindly towards the church. I don't quite know why he made for the church and not for the Vicarage."

"Oh, I know that," said Bunch. "He said, 'Sanctuary.'"

The doctor stared. "Sanctuary?"

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"Here's Julian," said Bunch, turning her head as she heard her husband's steps in the hall.

The Reverend Julian Harmon entered the room. His vague, scholarly manner always made him appear much older than he was.

"Dear me!" said Julian Harmon, gazing in a mild, puzzled manner at the surgical appliances and the figure on the sofa.

Bunch explained with her usual economy of words. "Do you know him, Julian? I thought he said your name."

The Vicar looked down at the dying man. "Poor fellow," he said, and shook his head. "No, I don't know him. I'm almost sure I've never seen him before."

At that moment the dying man's eyes opened once more. They went from the doctor to Julian Harmon, and from him to his wife. The eyes stayed there, staring into Bunch's face.

Dr. Griffiths stepped forward. "If you could tell us," he said urgently.

But with his eyes fixed on Bunch, the man said in a weak voice, "Please—please—"

And then, with a slight tremor, he died.

Sergeant Hayes licked his pencil and turned the page of his notebook. "So that's all you can tell me, Mrs. Harmon?"

"That's all," said Bunch. "These are the things out of his coat pockets."

On a table at Sergeant Hayes's elbow were a wallet, a rather battered old watch with the initials *W. S.*, and the return half of a ticket to London.

"You've found out who he is?" asked Bunch.

"A Mr. and Mrs. Eccles phoned up the police station. He's her brother, it seems. Name of Sandbourn. Been in a low state of health and nerves for some time. Depression. Recently come back from abroad, I understand. He's been getting worse lately. The day before yesterday he walked out and didn't come back. He took a revolver with him."

"And he came out here and shot himself?" said Bunch. "Why?"

"Well, you see, he'd been depressed—"

Bunch interrupted him. "I don't mean that. I mean, why here?"

Since Sergeant Hayes obviously did not know the answer to that one, he replied in an oblique fashion. "Come out here, he did, on the bus."

"Yes," said Bunch again. "But why?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Harmon," said Sergeant Hayes. "There's no accounting. If the balance of the mind is disturbed . . ."

Bunch finished for him. "They may do it anywhere. But it still seems to me unnecessary to take a bus to a small country place like this. He didn't know anyone here, did he?"

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"Not so far as can be ascertained," said Sergeant Hayes. He coughed in an apologetic manner and said, as he rose to his feet, "It may be as Mr. and Mrs. Eccles will come out and see you, ma'am—if you don't mind, that is."

"Of course, I don't mind," said Bunch. "I wish I had something to tell them."

"I'll be getting along," said Sergeant Hayes.

"I'm only so thankful," said Bunch, going with him to the front door, "that it wasn't murder."

A car was drawing up at the Vicarage gate.

Sergeant Hayes, glancing at it, remarked, "Looks as though that's Mr. and Mrs. Eccles come here now."

Bunch braced herself to endure what, she felt, might be an ordeal. Anyway, she thought, I can always call Julian in to help me.

Exactly what she had expected Mr. and Mrs. Eccles to be like, Bunch could not have said; but she was conscious, as she greeted them, of a feeling of surprise.

Mr. Eccles was a stout, florid man whose natural manner would have been cheerful.

Mrs. Eccles had a vaguely flashy look about her. She had a small, mean, pursed-up mouth. Her voice was thin and reedy. "It's been a terrible shock, Mrs. Harmon, as you can imagine," she said.

"Oh, I know," said Bunch. "It must have been. Do sit down. Can I offer you—well, perhaps it's a little early for tea—"

Mr. Eccles waved a podgy hand, "No, no, nothing for us," he said. "It's very kind of you, I'm sure. Just wanted to—well—what poor William said and all that, you know."

"He'd been abroad a long time," said Mrs. Eccles, "and I think he must have had some nasty experiences. Very quiet and depressed he's been, ever since he came home. Said the world wasn't fit to live in and there was nothing to look forward to. Poor Bill, he was always moody."

Bunch stared at them both for a moment without speaking.

"Pinched my husband's revolver, he did," went on Mrs. Eccles. "Without our knowing. Then it seems he come out here by bus. I suppose that was nice feeling on his part. He wouldn't have liked to do it in our house."

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Eccles, with a sigh. "It doesn't do to judge."

There was another short pause, and Mr. Eccles said, "Did he leave a message? Any last words, or anything like that?"

His bright, rather piglike eyes watched Bunch closely. Mrs. Eccles, too, leaned forward as though anxious for the reply.

"No," said Bunch quietly. "He came into the church when he was dying, for sanctuary."

Mrs. Eccles said in a puzzled

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voice, "Sanctuary? I don't quite . . ."

Mr. Eccles interrupted impatiently. "Holy place, my dear. That's what the Vicar's wife means. It's a sin—suicide, you know. I expect he wanted to make amends."

"He tried to say something just before he died," said Bunch. "He began, 'Please,' but that's as far as he got."

Mrs. Eccles put her handkerchief to her eyes and sniffed. "Oh, dear," she said. "It's terribly upsetting, isn't it?"

"There, there, Pam," said her husband. "Don't take on. These things can't be helped. Poor Willie. Still, he's at peace now. Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Harmon. I hope we haven't interrupted you."

They shook hands with her. Then Eccles turned back suddenly to say, "Oh, yes, there's just one other thing. I think you've got his coat here, haven't you?"

"His coat?" Bunch frowned.

Mrs. Eccles said, "We'd like to have his things. Sentimental-like."

"He had a watch and a wallet and a railway ticket in the pockets," said Bunch. "I gave them to Sergeant Hayes."

"That's all right, then," said Mr. Eccles. "He'll hand them over to us, I expect. His private papers would be in the wallet."

"There was a pound note in the wallet," said Bunch. "Nothing else."

"No letters? Nothing like that?"

Bunch shook her head.

"Well, thank you again, Mrs. Harmon. The coat he was wearing—is that at the station? Perhaps the sergeant's got that, too, has he?"

Bunch frowned in an effort of remembrance. "No," she said. "I don't think . . . let me see. The doctor took his coat off to examine his wound." She looked round the room vaguely. "I must have taken it upstairs with the towels and basin."

"I wonder now, Mrs. Harmon, if you don't mind . . . We'd like his coat, you know, the last thing he wore. The wife feels rather sentimental about it."

"Of course," said Bunch. "Would you like me to have it cleaned first? I'm afraid it's rather—well—stained."

"Oh, no, that doesn't matter."

"I wonder where . . . Excuse me a moment."

Bunch went upstairs, and it was a few minutes before she returned. "I'm sorry," she said breathlessly, "my daily woman must have put it aside with other clothes that were going to the cleaners. It's taken me quite a long time to find it. Here it is. I'll do it up for you in brown paper."

Disclaiming their protests, she did so, then once more effusively bidding her farewell, they departed.

Bunch went slowly back across the hall and entered the study. The Reverend Julian Harmon looked up and his brow cleared. He was writing a sermon and was fearing

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that he'd been led astray by the interest of the political relations between Judæa and Persia, in the reign of Cyrus.

"Yes, dear?" he said hopefully.

"Julian," said Bunch, "what's sanctuary exactly?"

Julian Harmon gratefully put aside his sermon paper. "Well," he said, "sanctuary in Roman and Greek temples applied to the cella in which stood the statue of the god. The Latin word for altar, ara, also means protection. In A.D. 399 the right of sanctuary in Christian churches was finally and definitively recognized. Criminals and refugees have taken advantage of the right of sanctuary since very early times. In the Bible, you may remember, Joab is mentioned as laying hold of the altar. The earliest mention of the right of sanctuary in England is in A.D. 600, in the code of laws issued by Ethelbert—"

He was, as often, disconcerted by his wife's reception of his erudite pronouncements. "Darling," she said. "You are sweet."

Bending over, she kissed him on the tip of his nose.

"The Eccles have been here," said Bunch.

The Vicar frowned. "The Eccles? I don't seem to remember . . ."

"You couldn't remember," said Bunch. "They're the sister and brother-in-law of the man in the church."

"My dear, you ought to have called me."

"It wasn't necessary," said Bunch. "They were not in need of consolation. I wonder now." She frowned. "If I put a casserole in the oven tomorrow, can you manage, Julian? I think I shall have to go up to London. There's a special white sale at Burrows and Portman's. Besides," she added thoughtfully, "I think I ought to go and see Aunt Jane."

That sweet old lady, Miss Jane Marple, was enjoying the delights of the metropolis for a fortnight, comfortably installed in her nephew's studio flat.

"So kind of dear Raymond," she murmured. "He and Joan have gone to America, and they insisted I should come up here and enjoy myself. I so seldom get the chance of staying in London. And now, dear Bunch, do tell me what is worrying you."

Bunch was Miss Marple's favorite godchild, and the old lady looked at her with great affection as Bunch, thrusting her best felt hat farther on the back of her head, started on her story.

The recital was concise and clear. Miss Marple nodded her head. "I see," she said. "Yes, I see."

"That's why I felt I had to talk to you," said Bunch. "I don't really know what I ought to do. I can't ask Julian because—well, I mean, Julian's full of rectitude . . ."

This statement appeared to be perfectly understood by Miss Marple, who said, "I know what you

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mean, dear. We women—well, it's different." She went on, "You told me what happened, Bunch, but I'd like to know first what you think."

"It's all wrong," said Bunch. "The man who was there in the church, dying, knew all about sanctuary. He said it just the way Julian would have said it. I mean he was a well read, educated man. And if he'd shot himself, he wouldn't drag himself into a church afterwards and say, 'Sanctuary.' Sanctuary means that you're pursued, and when you get into a church you're safe. Your pursuers can't touch you. At one time even the law couldn't get at you." She looked questioningly at Miss Marple, who nodded.

Bunch went on, "Those people, the Eccles, were quite different. Ignorant and coarse. And there's another thing. That watch—the dead man's watch. It had the initials *W.S.* on the back of it. But inside—I opened it—in very small lettering there was, *To Walter from his father,* and a date. Walter! The Eccles kept talking of him as William or Bill."

Miss Marple seemed about to speak, but Bunch rushed on, "I know you're not always called the name you're baptized by. I mean, I can understand that you might be christened William and called Porky, or Carrots, or something. But your sister wouldn't call you William or Bill if your name was Walter."

"You mean that she wasn't his sister?"

"I'm quite sure she wasn't his sister. They were horrid—both of them. They came to the Vicarage to get his things and to find out if he'd said anything before he died. When I said he hadn't, I saw it in their faces—relief. I think, myself," finished Bunch, "it was Eccles who shot him."

"Murder?" said Miss Marple.

"Yes," said Bunch. "Murder. That's why I came to you, darling."

Such a remark might have seemed incongruous to an ignorant listener, but in certain spheres Miss Marple had a reputation for dealing with murder.

"He said 'Please' to me before he died," said Bunch. "He wanted me to do something for him. The awful thing is I've no idea what."

Miss Marple considered for a moment then pounced on the point that had already occurred to Bunch. "But why was he there at all?" she asked.

"You mean," said Bunch, "if you wanted sanctuary you might pop into a church anywhere. There's no need to take a bus that only goes four times a day and come out to a lonely spot like ours."

"He must have come there for a purpose," Miss Marple said. "He must have come to see someone. Chipping Cleghorn's not a big place, Bunch. Surely you must have some idea of who it was he came to see?"

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Bunch reviewed the inhabitants of the village in her mind before slowly shaking her head. "In a way," she said, "it could be anybody."

"He never mentioned a name?"

"He said Julian, or I thought he said Julian. It might have been Julia, I suppose. As far as I know, there isn't any Julia living in Chipping Cleghorn."

She screwed up her eyes as she thought back to the scene. The man lying there on the chancel steps, the light coming through the window with its jewels of red and blue. . . .

"Jewels," said Bunch suddenly. "Perhaps that's what he said. The light coming through the east window looked like jewels."

"Jewels," said Miss Marple thoughtfully.

"I'm coming now," said Bunch, "to the most important thing of all. The reason really why I've come here today. You see, the Eccles made a great fuss about having his coat. We took it off when the doctor was seeing to him. It was an old, shabby sort of coat—there was no reason they should have wanted it. I mean, they didn't look poor or as though a suit would mean anything much to them. They pretended it had a sentimental value, but that was nonsense.

"Anyway, I went to find it, and as I was going up the stairs I remembered how he'd made a kind of picking gesture with his hand, as though he was fumbling with the coat.

"So when I got hold of the coat I looked at it very carefully and I saw that in one place the lining had been sewn up again with a different thread. Sewn up rather clumsily, as a man would sew it. I unpicked it and found a little piece of paper inside. I took it out and sewed it up again properly with thread that matched.

"I was careful, and I don't really think that the Eccles would know I'd done it. I don't think so, but I can't be sure. Then I took the coat down to them and made some excuse for the delay."

"The piece of paper?" asked Miss Marple.

Bunch opened her handbag. "I didn't show it to Julian," she said, "because he would have said that I ought to have given it to the Eccles. But I thought I'd rather bring it to you instead."

She handed the small docket across to Miss Marple.

"A cloakroom ticket," said Miss Marple, looking at it. "Paddington station."

"He had a return ticket to Paddington in his pocket," said Bunch.

"This calls for action," said Miss Marple "But it would be advisable, I think, to be careful. Would you have noticed at all, Bunch dear, whether you were followed when you came to London today?"

"Followed!" exclaimed Bunch. "You don't think—?"

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"Well, I think it's possible," said Miss Marple. "When anything is possible, I think we ought to take precautions." She rose with a brisk movement.

"You came up here ostensibly, my dear, to go to the sales. I think the right thing to do, therefore, would be for us to go to the sales. But before we set out, we might put one or two little arrangements in hand. I don't suppose," Miss Marple added obscurely, "that I shall need the old speckled tweed with the beaver collar just at present."

It was about an hour and a half later that the two ladies, rather the worse for wear and battered in appearance, their hair slightly dishevelled, their hats askew, and both clasping parcels of hard-won household linen, sat down at a small and sequestered restaurant, called The Apple Bough, to restore their forces with steak-and-kidney pudding followed by apple tart and custard.

A smart young woman, with a lavish application of rouge and lipstick, entered The Apple Bough. After looking round vaguely for a moment or two, she hurried to their table. She laid down an envelope by Miss Marple's elbow.

"There you are, miss," she said.

"Oh, thank you, Gladys," said Miss Marple. "Thank you very much. So kind of you."

"Always pleased to oblige, I'm sure," said Gladys. "Ernie always says to me, 'Everything what's good you learnt from that Miss Marple of yours that you were in service with. Trained you proper,' he says, 'and don't you forget it,' and I'm sure I'm always glad to oblige you, miss."

"Such a dear, dear girl," said Miss Marple as Gladys departed. "Always so willing and so kind. One wishes sometimes that they wouldn't wear so much lipstick—but I dare say it gives them self-confidence."

She looked inside the envelope and then passed it on to Bunch. "Now be very careful, dear," she said. "By the way, is there still that nice young Inspector Craddock at Melchester that I remember?"

"I don't know," said Bunch. "I expect so."

"Well, if not," said Miss Marple thoughtfully, "I can always ring up the Chief Constable. I think he would remember me."

"Of course he'd remember you," said Bunch. "Everybody would remember you. You're unique." She rose. "Well, I'd better hurry along or I shall miss the train."

Arrived at Paddington, Bunch went to the Left Luggage Office and produced the cloakroom ticket. A moment or two later a shabby suitcase was passed across to her, and carrying this she made her way to the platform where her train was already in.

The journey home was uneventful. Bunch got out of the train and made her way toward the exit, car-

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rying the suitcase. She had nearly reached the doorway when a man, sprinting along the platform, suddenly seized the suitcase from her hand and rushed off with it.

"Stop!" Bunch yelled. "Stop him, stop him. He's taken my suitcase."

The ticket collector who, at this rural station, was a man of somewhat slow processes, had just begun to say, "Now, look here, you can't do that—" when a smart blow in the chest pushed him aside and the man with the suitcase rushed out from the station. He made his way to where a car was waiting.

Tossing the suitcase in, he was about to climb after it when out of the darkness a hand fell on his shoulder, and the voice of Police Constable Abel said, "Now then, what's all this?"

"Nonsense," said the man. "I don't know what this lady means. It's my suitcase. I just got out of the train with it."

"Now, let's get this clear," said Police Constable Abel. He looked at Bunch with a bovine and impartial stare. Nobody would have guessed that Abel and Mrs. Harmon spent long half hours in his off time discussing the respective merits of manure and bone meal for rosebushes. "You say, madam, that this is your suitcase?" said Police Constable Abel.

"Yes," said Bunch. "Definitely."

"And you, sir?"

"I say this suitcase is mine."

The man was tall, dark, and well dressed, with a drawling voice and a superior manner. A feminine voice from inside the car said, "Of course it's your suitcase, Edwin. I don't know what this woman means.

"We'll have to get this clear," said Police Constable Abel. "If it's your suitcase, madam, what do you say is inside it?"

"Clothes," said Bunch. "A long, speckled coat with a beaver collar, two wool jumpers, and a pair of shoes."

"Well, that's clear enough." He turned to the other.

"I am a theatrical costumier," said the dark man importantly. "This suitcase contains properties which I brought down here for an amateur theatrical performance."

"Right, sir," said Police Constable Abel. "Well, we'll just look inside, shall we, and see? We can go along to the police station, or if you're in a hurry we'll take the suitcase back to the railway station and open it there."

"It'll suit me," said the dark man. "My name is Moss, by the way. Edwin Moss."

Police Constable Abel, holding the suitcase, went back into the station. "Just taking this into the Parcels Office, George," he said to the ticket collector.

"Oh, ay," said the latter.

Police Constable Abel laid the suitcase on the counter of the Parcels Office and pushed back the clasp. The case was not locked.

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Bunch and Mr. Edwin Moss stood on either side of him, glaring at each other.

"Ah!" said Abel, as he pushed up the lid.

Inside, neatly folded, was a long, rather shabby tweed coat with a beaver fur collar. There were also two woolen jumpers and a pair of country shoes.

"Exactly as you say, madam," said Police Constable Abel, turning to Bunch.

Nobody could have said that Mr. Edwin Moss underdid things. His dismay and compunction were magnificent.

"I do apologize," he said. "I really do apologize. I must somehow or other have left my own suitcase on the train. Please believe me, dear lady, when I tell you how very, very sorry I am. Unpardonable—quite unpardonable—my behavior has been." He looked at his watch. "I must rush now. Probably my suitcase has gone on in the train. What the company will say to me for having mislaid their properties! I shall have to see what can be done."

Raising his hat once more, he said meltingly to Bunch, "Do, do forgive me," and rushed hurriedly out of the Parcels Office.

"Are you going to let him get away?" asked Bunch in a conspiratorial whisper of Police Constable Abel.

The latter slowly closed a bovine eye in a wink. "He won't get far, ma'am," he said. "That's to say, he won't get far unobserved, if you take my meaning."

"Oh," said Bunch, relieved.

"That old lady's been on the phone," said Police Constable Abel, "the one as was down here a few years ago. Bright, she is, isn't she? Sharp as a needle. But there's been a lot cooking up all today. Shouldn't wonder if the Inspector or Sergeant was out to see you about it tomorrow morning."

It was the Inspector who came, the Inspector Craddock whom Miss Marple remembered. He looked rather older and more careworn than when Bunch had seen him last, but he greeted her with a smile as an old friend.

"Crime in Chipping Cleghorn again," he said cheerfully. "You don't lack sensation here, do you, Mrs. Harmon?"

"I could do with rather less," said Bunch. "Have you come to ask me questions, or are you going to tell me things for a change?"

"I'll tell you some things first," said the Inspector. "To begin with, Mr. and Mrs. Eccles have been having an eye kept on them for some time. There's reason to believe that they've been connected with several robberies in this part of the world. For another thing, although Mrs. Eccles has a brother named Sandbourn who has recently come back from abroad, the man whom you found dying on the chancel steps was definitely not Sandbourn."

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"I knew he wasn't," said Bunch. "His name was Walter, to begin with, not William."

The Inspector nodded. "Yes," he said, "they slipped up there."

"Who was he really?"

"His name was Walter Stevens, and he escaped some days ago from Charrington Prison."

"Of course," said Bunch softly to herself, "he was being hunted down by the law, and he took sanctuary." Then she asked, "What had he done?"

"I'll have to go back rather a long way. It's a complicated story. Several years ago there was a certain dancer doing turns in the music halls. I don't expect you'll have ever heard of her, but she specialized in an Arabian Nights' turn. She wore bits of rhinestone and not much else and called the turn Aladdin in the Cave of Jewels. She wasn't much of a dancer, I believe, but she was—well—attractive. Anyway, a certain Asiatic royalty fell for her in a big way. Among other things, he gave her a magnificent emerald necklace."

"The historic jewels of a rajah?" murmured Bunch.

Inspector Craddock coughed. "Well, a rather more modern version, Mrs. Harmon. The necklace came from Cartier's. The affair didn't last very long—it broke up when our potentate's attention was captured by a certain film star whose demands were not quite so modest. She demanded marriage, a settlement, and considerable alimony. But none of that is our business.

"Zobeida, to give her stage name, hung on to the necklace, and in due course it was stolen. It disappeared from her dressing room at the theatre and there was a lingering suspicion in the minds of the authorities that she herself might have engineered its disappearance. Such things have been known as a publicity stunt, or indeed from more dishonest motives. The necklace was never recovered, but during the course of the investigation the attention of the police was drawn to this man, Walter Stevens.

"He was a man of education and breeding who had come down in the world, and who was employed as a working jeweler with a rather obscure firm which was suspected of acting as a fence for jewel robberies. There was evidence that this necklace had passed through his hands, and indeed the actual setting of the jewels was found, so it looked as though he'd abstracted the emeralds and disposed of them.

"It was, however, in connection with the theft of some other jewelry that he was finally brought to trial, convicted, and sent to prison. He had earned remission for good conduct in prison and had not very much longer to serve, so his escape was rather a surprise."

"But why did he come here?" asked Bunch.

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"We'd like to know that very much, Mrs. Harmon. Following up his trail, it seems that he went first to London. He didn't see any of his old associates, but he visited an elderly woman, a Mrs. Jackson, who had formerly been a theatrical dresser. She won't say a word of what he came for but, according to other lodgers in the house, he left carrying a suitcase."

"I see," said Bunch. "He left it in the cloakroom at Paddington and then he came down here."

"By that time," said Inspector Craddock, "Eccles and the man who calls himself Edwin Moss were on his trail. They wanted that suitcase. They saw him get on the bus. They must have driven out in a car ahead of him, and been waiting for him when he left the bus."

"And he was murdered?" said Bunch.

"Yes," said Craddock. "It was Eccles' revolver, but I rather fancy it was Moss who did the shooting. Now, Mrs. Harmon, what we want to know is, where is the suitcase that Walter Stevens actually deposited at Paddington station?"

Bunch grinned. "Aunt Jane's got it," she said. "Miss Marple, I mean. That was her plan. She sent a former maid of hers with a suitcase packed with her things to the cloakroom at Paddington. We exchanged tickets, and I collected her suitcase and brought it down by train. She seemed to expect that an attempt would be made to get it from me."

It was Inspector Craddock's turn to smile. "So she said when she rang up," he said. "I'm driving up to London to see her. Do you want to come too, Mrs. Harmon?"

"We—ell," said Bunch, considering. "We—ell, as a matter of fact, it's very fortunate. I had toothache last night, so I really ought to go to London to see the dentist, oughtn't I?"

"Definitely," said Inspector Craddock.

Miss Marple looked from Inspector Craddock's face to the eager face of Bunch Harmon. The suitcase lay on the table.

"Of course I haven't opened it," the old lady said. "I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing till somebody official arrived. Besides," she added, with a mischievous Victorian smile, "it's locked."

"Like to make a guess at what's inside, Miss Marple?" asked the Inspector.

"I should imagine," said Miss Marple, "that it would be Zobeida's theatrical costumes. Would you like a screwdriver, Inspector?"

The screwdriver soon did its work. Both women gave a slight gasp as the lid flew up. The sunlight coming through the window lit up what seemed like a treasure of sparkling jewels, red, blue, green, orange.

"Aladdin's Cave," said Miss Marple. "The flashing jewels the girl wore in her dance."

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"Ah," said Inspector Craddock. "Now, what's so precious about it, do you think, that a man was murdered to get hold of it?"

"She was a shrewd girl, I expect," said Miss Marple thoughtfully. "She's dead, isn't she, Inspector?"

"Yes, died three years ago."

"She had this valuable emerald necklace," said Miss Marple musingly. "Had the stones taken out of their setting and fastened here and there on her theatrical costume, where everyone would take them merely for colored rhinestones. Then she had a replica made of the Cartier necklace, and that of course was what was stolen. No wonder it never came on the market. The thief soon discovered the stones were false."

"Here is an envelope," said Bunch.

Inspector Craddock took it from her and extracted two official-looking papers. He read aloud: *Marriage certificate between Walter Edmund St. John Stevens and Mary Moss.* That was Zobeida's real name."

"So they were married," said Miss Marple. "I see."

"What's the other?" asked Bunch.

"A birth certificate of a daughter, Jewel."

"Jewel?" cried Bunch. "Why, of course. Jewel! Jill! That's it. I see now why he came to Chipping Cleghorn. That's what he was trying to say to me. Jewel. Mrs. Mundy, you know. Laburnum Cottage. She looks after a little girl for someone. She's devoted to her. She's been like her own granddaughter. Yes, I remember now, her name was Jewel, only of course they never call her anything but Jill.

"Mrs. Mundy had a stroke about a week ago. I've been trying hard to find a good home for Jill. I didn't want her taken away to an institution. Her father must have heard about it in prison and managed to break away and get hold of this suitcase from the old dresser he or his wife left it with. I suppose if the jewels really belonged to her mother, they can be used for the child now."

"I should imagine so, Mrs. Harmon. *If* they're here."

"Oh, they'll be here all right," said Miss Marple cheerfully.

"Thank goodness you're back, dear," said the Reverend Harmon, greeting his wife with affection and a sigh of content. "Mrs. Burt really gave me some very peculiar fishcakes for lunch. I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so I gave them to Tiglath Pileser, but even he wouldn't eat them. I'm afraid I had to throw them out of the window."

"Tiglath Pileser," said Bunch, stroking the cat, "is very particular about what fish he eats. I often tell him he's got a proud stomach."

"And your tooth, dear?" asked her husband. "Did you have it seen to?"

"Yes," said Bunch. "It didn't hurt

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much, and I went to see Aunt Jane, too."

"Dear old thing," said Julian Harmon, "I hope she's not failing at all."

"Not in the least," said Bunch with a slight grin.

The following morning Bunch took a fresh supply of chrysanthemums to the church. The sun was once more pouring through the east window and Bunch stood in the jeweled light on the chancel steps. She said very softly under her breath, "Your little girl will be all right. I'll see that she is, I promise."

Then she tidied up the church, slipped into a pew, and knelt for a few moments to say her prayers before returning to the Vicarage to attack the accumulated dust of two neglected days.

"Q"

NEXT MONTH...

an unusual *new* story by
JOHN D. MacDONALD

an unusual *new* story by
HOLLY ROTH

an unusual *new* story by
VICTOR CANNING

an unusual Nero Wolfe short novel by
REX STOUT

an unusual "*unknown*" story by
EDGAR WALLACE

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a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	HARRY KEMELMAN
TITLE:	*The Adelphi Bowl*
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Nicholas (Nicky) Welt
LOCALE:	A university town in the United States
COMMENTS:	*Another of the author's masterly studies in the art of deduction—how one simple, apparently trivial fact leads, by inexorable logic, to the solution of a not-so-simple crime . . . Cheers!*

I WAS FULLY PREPARED TO SPEND the week or ten days that it would take to redecorate my house at a hotel, but when I mentioned it to Nicky and he suggested that I stay with him instead, I was curiously touched and readily accepted. Nicky—Nicholas Welt, Snowden Professor of English Literature at the University—was only a few years older than I, but his lined, gnome-like face and his prematurely snow-white hair—my own was just beginning to turn gray at the temples—made him seem much older.

Nicky treated me as very much his junior, usually with the touch of condescension a teacher has for a not-over-bright sophomore, and I willingly fell into the role assigned me. It has been that way from the beginning of our friendship, when I had first joined the Law Faculty, and it continued even after I gave up teaching to campaign — successfully — for the office of County Attorney.

The Professor lived in a boarding house a couple of blocks from the railroad depot at some little distance from the University, a circumstance which from his point of view was one of the virtues of the place since it gave him a brisk fifteen-minute constitutional every

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day, and also cut down on the number of people who might be likely to drop in on him of an evening had he been nearer. He occupied a small suite on the second floor consisting of bedroom, study, and bath, and either by reason of his seniority at the boarding house —he had lived there all the time I've known him, or by reason of his academic eminence (in a university town that is important), he was the star boarder.

Mrs. Keefe, his landlady, was always doing special little things for him, such as bringing up a tray with cake and coffee in the evening, and this in spite of his having an electric hot plate in his room, as did all the rooms in the establishment, and being capable of doing for himself. Obviously, she offered no objection to my coming there. In fact, it was all Nicky could do to prevent her from removing the cot in the study and bringing in a full-sized bed.

As it turned out, I was fortunate in the arrangement, for a portion of that period of ten days coincided with a University Convocation. We had had convocations before, and they had disturbed the even flow of university life but little; but this year the University had a new president—one of the new type of college presidents, a young, eager, efficient executive—and he had arrangd for scholars and bigwigs to be brought from the ends of the earth.

There were meetings and conferences and panel discussions scheduled for every hour for each of the three days. But what is more to the purpose, every hotel room in town, every bit of available dormitory space, seemingly every unoccupied bed, had been commandeered by the University for the expected distinguished guests.

If I had gone to a hotel, I probably would have had to share my room with one or more of the visitors. And if I had remained in my own house, I would have been in a worse case—the unwilling host of a dozen or more. As it was, Professor Richardson, who was Chairman of the Committee on Housing Arrangements, gave me a reproachful look when I ran across him at the Faculty Club, and practically implied that I had purposely arranged to have my house decorated during Convocation Week just to avoid having to entertain guests of the University.

Mrs. Keefe, on the other hand, like all the other boarding-house proprietors, was naturally delighted. She had a room up in the attic which she rarely succeeded in renting, into which she now managed to crowd three young women from India who were to take part in the discussions on Village Medicine. She had coaxed or browbeaten the amiable young graduate student who had the room immediately above ours to share his room with a bearded Pakistani in a turban.

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The room across the hall from us was occupied by another graduate student who had been called home because of sickness in the family, and she had promptly rented it, presumably with his permission, to two of the visitors, one of whom arrived Sunday and the other the following day by the evening train.

Later that evening, after the two men across the hall had had a chance to get settled, Nicky knocked on their door and invited them to spend the evening with us. I am sure that he was moved as much by curiosity as he was by feelings of hospitality. The earlier arrival was a young man of about thirty, tall and blond, with a charming mid-European accent and the impossible name of Erik Flugelheimer. He was lively and vivacious, and yet he had a humility that was not the least part of his charm.

His roommate was a short dark man, perhaps ten years older, whose name was Earl Blodgett. He was stuffy and pompous and quite convinced of his own importance. He turned out to be none other than the Assistant Curator of the Far East Division of the Laurence Winthrop Collection. Since the theme of the Convocation was, as the program leaflet gave it, "The New World of the Far East," his importance in the general scheme of things was obvious. He was also precise, meticulous, and crotchety.

When Nicky set about preparing coffee for our guests, Blodgett said, "I'm afraid I can't. It keeps me awake till all hours. Might I have some tea instead? Do you have a kettle? If not, I can get the one from our room."

Nicky assured him that he had tea and a kettle and was about to prepare it when Blodgett begged leave to prepare it himself. "I am very particular as to just how it is brewed. I'm sure you won't mind."

Nicky did mind, of course, but he was a gracious host and motioned his guest to the hot plate.

Erik laughed. "He cannot abide coffee and I can't stand tea. We have both a teapot and a percolator but we have only one burner on our hot plate. We shall have to toss a coin to decide who will make his drink first in the morning."

We sipped at our drinks and talked about the scheduled events. I remarked that the emphasis seemed to be primarily political and sociological and for that reason there might not be too much interest in the Art Section meetings.

"I have every reason to believe," Blodgett said with lofty complacency, "that the Art Section will provide the most noteworthy contribution of the Convocation."

"Are you planning a surprise of some sort?" I asked.

Blodgett gave me a superior smile. "Have you ever heard of the Adelphi Bowl?" he asked.

Nicky pricked up his ears.

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"George Slocumbe, the Fine Arts man here, was telling me about it just the other day. He said it had recently been acquired by a private collection. He didn't mention the Laurence Winthrop Collection. Do you mean that you have it and are planning to exhibit it here?"

"What is it, Nicky?" I asked.

"It's a bowl made of massive gold and encrusted with precious stones. It's worth—"

"It is priceless," said Blodgett.

"And you are going to exhibit it here at the Convocation?" I asked.

Blodgett shrugged. "Perhaps."

Rather than press him, I turned to his roommate. "And you, are you going to surprise the Convocation, too?"

The blond young man shook his head ruefully. "I am not a distinguished scholar like my roommate. I am an instructor of Mathematics at Muhlbach College in North Dakota. Have you ever heard of it? Ah, I thought not. It is a small denominational college where once a year the Minneapolis Symphony gives a concert and maybe two or three times a year we get a road company with the New York hits of three years ago. So when notice of your Convocation was posted on the bulletin board and I saw that it would come during our April vacation, I decided to come here. I shall attend as many sessions as I can. Who knows, I might get to ask an intelligent question and this might call me to the attention of one of your distinguished guests from one of the larger colleges who might decide that I might make a worthwhile addition to his faculty and rescue me from Mulbach."

The Convocation was scheduled to last three days—Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Blodgett's talk was scheduled for Wednesday evening. He chose to regard the scheduling as indicative of the importance of his talk, as though the Convocation was arranged to work up to a climax. Under the circumstances, I did not have the heart to point out that since the evening train left about an hour before his discourse, the likelihood was that the great majority of the guests would have left the University by the time he was scheduled to speak.

The next day, Tuesday, I left my office early—just after lunch, in fact. It was too nice a day to work. I strolled along leisurely, savoring the April air, choosing the long way back to the boardinghouse—through the campus. I saw Earl Blodgett and stopped to talk with him. I invited him to join me back to the house, but he was planning to take in some of the lectures, so I left him.

Just as I arrived at the boardinghouse, I saw Erik turn the corner. I waited for him and we walked up the front stairs together. The mail had just been delivered and was lying in a pile on the hall table. I checked the letters to see if there was anything for me or for Nicky.

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"I don't suppose there is anything for me," Erik said.

"Here's one for your roommate though," and I handed him an envelope.

Included in the mail were a couple of magazines and I glanced through them idly while Erik went up to his room. Nicky was at his desk in the study, correcting student blue books, when I entered.

"Are you planning to go to the Convocation Dinner tonight?" I asked.

He gave me a sour grin. "I went to the Convocation Luncheon this noon," he said. "That's about as much Convocation eating as I can stand for awhile. I can forgive the gelatinous creamed chicken in a soggy pastry shell since that's standard, but the conversation at these affairs is a little more difficult on the digestion. There were two females, one on either side of me, who were conversing largely across me and talking the most utter drivel. One urged with all seriousness that mirrored in every leaf or bud there is the clue to the entire cosmos. I am not unfamiliar with the more insane of the transcendentalists, but I don't believe any of them ever really believed the nonsense as a purely practical matter—that is, that one could determine, for example, the speed of the earth's rotation by studying the leaf of a tree."

"And you think your luncheon companion did?"

"Well, she had been in India, and she had been taken to all the tourist traps—the usual guru—and this one was able to take a single hair from a man's head and tell all about him. Another thing that he did: he had himself blindfolded and he had one of the company—there were about twenty, as I understand, pluck a single note on a native harp, and then he was able to tell which of the twenty onlookers had struck the note."

"That's rather hard to believe, of course, but I once spoke to a concert pianist who told me that if he and Rubinstein both struck the same key on the same piano, there would be a distinct difference in sound that would be apparent to anyone."

"Nonsense," said Nicky decisively.

At that moment the quiet of our boardinghouse was broken by the shrill hoarse whistle of our neighbor's teakettle. Nicky is so positive in his opinions that the chance of scoring on him was irresistible. I appeared to be listening intently for a moment, then I said, "I am not so sure, Nicky. Now I would be willing to wager that the discordant note of that teakettle shows the fine Middle-European hand of our friend Erik, rather than the restrained, repressed character of the excellent Blodgett."

"Then you would lose," said Nicky with a wry grin, "because it is Earl Blodgett who is the tea drinker. Erik drinks coffee."

I rattled the loose coins in my

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trouser pocket. "I am still willing to make the wager," I said smugly.

Nicky peered out at me from under his bushy eyebrows. "You are too certain," he said. "You must know something. Did you meet Erik on the stairs and did he tell you that his roommate was not in?"

I nodded sheepishly. "Something like that. I met Earl at the University and he said he was staying for some lectures. Erik came in with me. I stopped to look through the mail. There was a letter for Earl which I gave him to take up. I assume that Earl didn't change his mind about the lectures and that Erik must be in the room alone. I suppose he decided to try the tea for once just to see what Earl finds in the stuff."

Nicky had turned back to his blue books even while I was talking. Without looking up, he said, "The whistling of the teakettle does not mean that our friend is brewing tea, only that he is boiling water."

"Why else would he boil water?"

"There are any number of reasons he might have for boiling water. He might even be interested not in the water but in the by-product."

"What's the by-product of boiling water?" I demanded.

"Steam."

"Steam? What would he want with steam?"

Nicky put his pile of blue books away and looked up at me. "He might want it for loosening the gummed flap on an envelope."

"You think he is opening Blodgett's letter? Why would he want to read Blodgett's mail?"

Nicky sat back in his chair. "Let's think about it. Of course, he might be an extremely inquisitive person who finds anything that is closed a challenge to his curiosity. But that's not too likely. It is also most unlikely that he knows anyone who would be apt to be writing to Blodgett. That suggests that there is something about the sealed envelope that indicated that it would be worth his while to open it."

I fell into the spirit of the game. "You mean he could tell something from the handwriting or the return address?"

"That's a possibility," said Nicky, "but that would mean that the address was in Blodgett's own handwriting."

"How do you arrive at that conclusion?"

"Well, consider the two men. Blodgett and Erik are engaged in entirely different fields of study; they come from utterly different backgrounds, and from widely separated parts of the country. It is unlikely they have any friends or acquaintances in common. The only handwriting that he might be familiar with would be Blodgett's, from having seen his notes lying about perhaps. It is possible that alone might excite his curiosity; what is Blodgett writing to himself? But what I had in mind was that the mere *feel* of the envelope

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might lead him to want to open it."

"You mean it might contain money—say, bills of large denomination?"

Nicky shook his head. "They would feel just like any other paper. If it were something heavy—"

"Like a coin," I exclaimed, having in mind a rare antique.

"Possible, but not reasonable. If it were a coin of great value, he would be fairly certain to see it when Blodgett opened his letter—if he only wanted to see it. On the other hand, if he wanted to steal it, he would not bother to steam the envelope open, he would merely take the envelope. Sooner or later, however, the theft would be discovered and investigation would prove that Erik must have taken it. No, I would say that line of reasoning is not too fertile. I am inclined to agree that the envelope contained something that could be felt, probably metal, necessarily flat. But I rather think that it would be something that has no great value in itself. A key, for instance."

"A woman—"

Nicky smiled. "You are incurably romantic. You were about to suggest that some woman had sent Blodgett a key to her apartment for an assignation. Somehow our friend Blodgett doesn't seem the type. And why would Erik be interested in his roommate's amours? No, no, a locker key is more likely than a house key." Nicky nodded his head vigorously. "Yes, a locker key is the most likely thing. And a locker key implies something small—at least, portable—and probably valuable."

"But where would Blodgett get a locker key?"

"Just as anyone else would obtain it. Consider: he gets off the train in a strange town. It is dark and he is going to a boardinghouse, not a hotel with a safe, mind you. What more natural than to put the valuable object he is carrying into one of the lockers at the depot?"

I nodded thoughtfully.

"Now we have to rely on our imagination. Why didn't he just pocket the key instead of enclosing it in an envelope and addressing it to himself here at the boardinghouse?" Nicky shrugged. "He is a nervous, edgy sort of man. Perhaps just as he finished putting the object away, he noticed someone watching him, or thought he noticed someone. Just putting the object away in a locker would not do much to insure its safety if a few minutes after leaving the depot he were waylaid and robbed of the key."

"He could have taken a cab at the station," I objected.

"Monday night? With dozens of strangers coming into town and only one full-time cab available? He probably asked for a cab and was told there was none. Then he in turn was asked where he was going. When he tells them his destina-

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tion is the Keefe House, he learns, perhaps for the first time, that it is a boardinghouse, rather than a hotel. And his informant goes on to tell him that it is only a couple of blocks away and he can easily walk it."

"All right, I'll grant you that he might have been nervous and thought someone was watching him, but—"

"And I should like to point out," Nicky cut in, "that seeing the envelope addressed to Blodgett in Blodgett's own handwriting, and postmarked yesterday from this very town, in conjunction with the feel of the key—all that would set our friend Erik thinking precisely along these lines."

"But hang it all, Nicky, why does it have to be a valuable object? It could be that he had two suitcases and didn't feel up to carrying both, especially if he were going to walk. What more natural than to put one in a locker and carry the other, the one that contains his shaving kit?"

"He's only going to be here for a couple of days. Two bags are most unlikely. Besides, if it were only a suitcase that contained a change of underwear and a couple of extra shirts, he would not bother to mail himself the key. He would just pocket it."

"I suppose you are suggesting that it is the Adelphi Bowl that he left in the locker. What did he say it was worth?"

Nicky nodded with relish. "He didn't—except to say that it was priceless. Of course, what he had in mind was that it was unique and hence no price could be set on it. But even if it were broken up, I fancy the gold and the gems would come to many thousands of dollars."

"Dammitall, Nicky, a man doesn't go lugging something like that around with him and then leave it in a railroad locker."

"Why not?" Nicky demanded. "If it's small and portable, what better way of transporting it from one place to another than by carrying it? I imagine it has its own fitted case with a handle and looks like an overnight bag. Is it your idea that it should be transported in an armored car with a guard? That *would* be dangerous. It would be alerting every thief in the area. It's natural for you to think that way since your work does not call for handling valuable objects. But those who normally do are a lot more matter-of-fact about it. I knew a diamond merchant who used to travel about a great deal. He carried a fortune in unmounted stones in little folds of paper—parcels he called them—and these he simply carried in a wallet in his inside breast pocket."

"Then your idea is that Erik sees an envelope addressed by Blodgett to himself—"

"And postmarked from here," Nicky interjected.

"All right, and postmarked from here, and he feels a key inside it;

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and knowing that Blodgett is going to display the Adelphi Bowl he comes to the same conclusion that you have—that it is at present resting in a locker in our modest little depot, instead of in the Bursar's safe at the University, having been previously sent down by the museum authorities."

"Precisely."

"Then why does he bother to steam open the envelope?" I asked triumphantly. "Why doesn't he just tear it open, take out the key, go down to the depot, and get it? Or isn't he as sure as you are and intends to examine the contents of the locker first and then if it is not the Bowl, seal the key up in the envelope again?"

"No, no," said Nicky testily. "He's sure enough, but he can't just go down there and take it. For one thing, there's no train out of here at this time. For another, Blodgett will miss the letter. We know it came in. Suspicion would point—suspicion? No, certainty would point to Erik. And how far do you suppose he would get? Look there."

He was standing near the window and I joined him there. On the sidewalk just beneath our windows stood Erik. He looked quickly in either direction, and then with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, for there was still a bite to the air, he turned to the right and headed toward the depot at a brisk walk.

Nicky turned away. "No danger," he said. "He will go down to the depot and deposit a quarter in one of the lockers and put the key to that locker in the envelope. No, he won't. Blodgett might remember the location of his locker. He'll remove the Bowl from Blodgett's locker to another and then put the original key back in the envelope."

"And what should we do about it?" I asked. "Call the police and have them—"

"Call the police?" Nicky stared at me in disbelief. "For what?" he demanded. "Because a young man chooses to boil some water in order to make a cup of instant coffee rather than go to the trouble of preparing a percolator?"

"But going down to the depot—"

"To get a timetable, I imagine."

It suddenly came to me that I had been had, that Nicky was merely paying me back for my foolish little wager, and that indeed nothing had happened except that Erik had boiled a kettle of water.

Nevertheless, I was uneasy, and the next morning, after Nicky had left, I called my office to tell them that I would not be in that day. I sat near the window where I could command a view of the street. Shortly after ten, I saw Erik leave and head for the University.

I put on my topcoat and followed him, keeping about a block behind him, but being careful to keep him in sight all the time. As we approached the University, I quickened my pace and drew nearer so as not to lose him in the crowd.

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I kept Erik in sight all morning. When he went into a meeting room and took a seat in front, I followed and found a seat in the rear. At noon I saw him enter the cafeteria and only then did I leave him and head for home. Nicky was in the room when I arrived.

"Didn't you go to your office today?" he asked with a little smirk of amusement on his vinegary face.

"No, I didn't," I said shortly.

I took a seat near the window and stared moodily at the street below while Nicky continued the perusal of his interminable blue books. Presently I saw Erik striding along and a moment later I heard him taking the steps two at a time. He was evidently in high spirits. We could hear him moving around in his room and I assumed he was packing.

A quarter of an hour later he knocked at our door. "I'm so glad you're both in," he said. "I am leaving now. I'm taking the one-thirty out. It was nice meeting you."

"We'll walk you down to the depot," said Nicky. "There'll be quite a few leaving on this train. I ought to say goodbye to some of them."

"And did you profit from the Convocation?" Nicky asked as we walked along.

The young man grinned. "I had one offer of a job," he said, "but it's in India."

Although we were early, there were quite a number already at the depot waiting for the train. We stood there, engaged in desultory conversation. A number of people whom we had met nodded to us and one or two came over to shake hands and say goodbye.

It was while we were thus engaged that Erik drifted away toward the news counter. He purchased a magazine to read on the train and then sauntered on to the bank of lockers just beyond. I was about to follow him when Nicky signaled me to remain where I was. Then *he* followed him.

The train pulled in and the crowd surged forward to get on. I waited, wondering what was happening. Finally the conductor shouted, "All Aboard," and it was only then that I saw Erik, running to get aboard the train. I was about to intercept him when I saw Nicky. He was sauntering and looked smug and self-satisfied.

"Well," I demanded.

For answer Nicky held out his hand and there was a locker key on his upraised palm.

"What did he say?"

"I asked him for the key and he saw that I knew," said Nicky. "He asked me if someone had seen him, and I said, 'No, but I heard you boiling up some water.' Then he gave me the key."

"Now what?" I asked.

"I think as County Attorney you ought to have enough influence with the stationmaster or whoever is in charge here to open Locker 518

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so that we can transfer the Bowl back to it."

As we walked toward the boarding house, I said, "Do you think we were right in letting him go, Nicky? After all, we are compounding a felony."

"Would it have been better if it had all been made public and the University were involved in a scandal, not to mention that Blodgett would have lost his job?"

I did not press the matter.

When we got back to the boarding house, Blodgett was there. "I guess I missed Erik," he said. "I planned to get back in time to see him off, but there were some last-minute arrangements that I had to make for my paper tonight."

"Has the Bowl arrived yet?" asked Nicky gravely.

"Arrived? Why I brought it with me. I checked it in one of the lockers at the railroad station."

"At the railroad station?"

Blodgett laughed. "It's quite safe, I assure you. By far the best place. I'll pick it up on my way and then cab over to the University. Will you be coming to the meeting tonight?"

"We have an engagement," said Nicky, "But we'll try to get in, if only for a few minutes."

We did not go to the meeting. Instead, we spent the evening playing chess at the Faculty Club. By this time most of the visitors had gone and the place was quiet and peaceful. At nine o'clock Professor Richardson came in. There had been photographs and he was carrying his academic gown and hood in the crook of his arm. He sat down heavily.

"Thank God, that's over," he said.

"Successful Convocation, Professor?" I asked.

"All right, I guess, as these things go," he said. "Of course, Prex would have liked a little more publicity than we got. I gather he would have liked something really dramatic to make headlines—a murder perhaps, or the theft of the University uranium supply."

"You should have told us earlier," said Nicky, "we might have arranged it."

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THE CASE OF THE CRYING SWALLOW

by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

(*Continued from page 28*)

Mason entered the trailer, and carefully avoiding the red pool, looked down at the body. Then he bent over, touched the high-heeled cowboy boot, moved it gently back and forth.

"Been dead for some time, Paul. *Rigor mortis* has set in."

"Come on out," Drake begged. "Let's play this one safe and notify the police."

"Just a minute," Mason said. "I . . ." He bent over, and as he did so a shaft of light struck his face.

"What's that?" Drake asked.

Mason moved slightly so that the beam of light struck his eye.

"That," he announced, "is a hole in this trailer, directly in line with the window of that Oklahoma trailer. Light from the window over there where the woman is cooking comes through the hole in this trailer. The hole could have been made by a bullet."

"Okay, Perry. Let's notify the police."

Mason said, "First I want to find out a little more about that Oklahoma trailer."

"For the luvva Mike, Perry, have a heart! You're in the clear on this one—so far."

Mason, moving cautiously, left the trailer. He hesitated a moment when he stepped to the ground. Then he carefully polished the doorknob with his handkerchief.

"That's removing evidence," Drake said. "There are other prints there besides yours."

"How do you know?"

"It stands to reason."

"You can't prove it," Mason said. "The murderer probably wiped his fingerprints off the door just as I did."

Mason walked back to the trailer with the Oklahoma license. The man, still bent over the bumper at the rear of the trailer, seemed to be working aimlessly, stalling for time. The position of his head indicated an interest in what had been going on over at the other trailer.

"That the one?" he asked as Mason approached.

"I don't know. No one seems to be home."

"I ain't seen 'em leave. They couldn't go very far without their car."

"Seen any visitors over there?" Mason asked casually.

"Not today. There was a young woman called last night."

"What time?"

"I don't know. We'd gone to bed. Her headlights shone in the window and woke me up when she came. I sat up in bed and looked out the window."

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"See her plain?"

"Yeah—a redhead. Checkered suit—trim-looking package."

"She go in?"

"I guess so. She switched off her lights and I went back to sleep. Woke me up again when she left. Her car backfired a couple of times."

Mason glanced at Drake. "I'd like to find these people."

"I think there's only one—a man. He drove in last night and had quite a bit of trouble backing the trailer around. But what really woke me up was headlights shining in my window. I looked out and seen this woman."

"Remember what sort of car she was driving?"

"It was a rented car."

"How do you know?"

"From the gasoline rationing stamp on the windshield."

"Your wife didn't wake up?"

"No."

"How long have *you* been here?" Mason asked.

"What's it to you?"

"Nothing."

"I thought not," the man said, suddenly suspicious, and then after a moment added, "You're asking a lot of questions."

"Sorry," Mason said.

The man hesitated a moment, then, by way of dismissal, turned back to the bumper.

Mason glanced at Paul Drake. Silently the two walked away.

"Okay, Paul," Mason said in a low voice. "Get Della on the phone. Tell her to put operatives on every drive-yourself car agency within a radius of fifty miles and see if we can find where the woman rented the car. When we spot the place, I'll handle the rest of it."

"I don't like it," Drake said.

"I don't like it myself," Mason told him. "The young woman who called there last night was Marcia Winnett."

"And her car backfired," Drake said dryly.

Mason met his eyes. "Her car backfired, Paul. And in case it ever becomes necessary, remember that the only person who heard it said it *was* a backfire."

Drake nodded gloomily. "Not that *that* will do any good, Perry."

"It keeps us in the clear, Paul. You don't rush to the police to report that someone's car backfired."

"When you've discovered a body, you do."

"Who knows we've discovered any body?"

"I do."

Mason laughed. "Back to the hotel, Paul. We'll try and trace that car. And just to be on the safe side, we'll see where Mrs. Drummond was last night."

The last task Mason had given Paul Drake turned out to be simple. Mrs. Drummond had been trying to locate her husband in the nearby trailer camps all the evening before, and she had arranged

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with a police officer who was off duty to accompany her.

Locating the rented car in which the girl in the checkered suit went to the trailer camp was another matter.

Despite all Drake's efficiency, it was nearing eight o'clock when his detectives uncovered the lead Mason wanted. A man who operated a car rental agency in one of the coast cities, some twenty-five miles from Silver Strand Beach, had rented a car to a young woman who wore a checkered suit and who answered the description of Marcia Winnett.

Drake looked up from the telephone. "Want my man to try and pick up the trail from there or do you want to do it, Perry?"

Mason said, "I'll do it, Paul. And just to be on the safe side, let your man think that isn't the trail we want."

"Okay," Drake said, and then into the telephone, "Describe her, Sam. Uh huh . . . uh huh, well, that's not the one. Keep working. Cover those other agencies."

Drake hung up the phone. "Want me to come along, Perry?"

"Della and I'll handle it," Mason said. "Start calling your men in. Let them feel it turned out to be a false lead. And you'd better start checking on Mrs. Drummond, Paul. I wouldn't like to have her show up right now."

Drake nodded, said solicitously, "Watch your step, Perry."

"I'm watching it. Come on, Della."

The man who operated the car rental agency which had furnished a car to Marcia Winnett was not particularly communicative. It took diplomacy to get him in the mood to talk. Even then he confined his information to bare essentials.

He had never seen his customer before. She gave her name as Edith Bascom. She said her mother had died and it was necessary for her to use a car in connection with handling the estate. She was registered at the local hotel.

"Do you check on these stories?" Mason asked. "Or do you just rent cars?"

"Sometimes we just rent cars. Sometimes we check."

"What did you do in this case?"

"Cars are scarce now," the man said. "We checked."

"How?"

The man picked up a daily paper dated the day before and indicated the obituary column. Mason followed the man's finger to the stereotyped announcement of the death of Mrs. Shirley Bascom and the statement that funeral arrangements would be private.

Mason said, "I guess that covers it all right."

"What's your interest in it?"

"I'm a lawyer."

"I see. Well, she's okay. Rather upset on account of her mother's death, but a nice girl. You'll find

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her in the Palace Hotel, two blocks down the street."

It was but a matter of routine for Mason and his secretary to get the number of the room assigned to Edith Bascom. Two minutes later Mason was knocking on the door.

There was no answer. Mason tried the knob. The door was locked.

Mason made a swift survey of the hall, stooped, and held out his hands. "Step on my hands, Della. Take a quick look through the transom."

She braced herself with a hand on his shoulder, caught the lower ledge of the transom, and peered through.

Mason, steadying her, felt her body stiffen. Then she was scrambling to get down.

"Chief," she said in an ominous whisper, "she's stretched out on the bed. She's . . . terribly still."

"Lights on?"

"No, but the shade is up and there's enough light coming in from the electric sign in front to make out the form on the bed."

Mason said, "There's a spring lock on the door . . . Better take another look, Della. See if she's breathing and . . . hold it. Here comes a chambermaid."

The chambermaid who wearily approached was aroused only momentarily from the lethargy of overwork by the bill Mason pushed into her palm.

"My wife and I seem to have left our key downstairs. If you could let us in, it would save us a trip down . . ."

"It's against the rules," she said, then added tonelessly, "but I guess it's okay." She produced her passkey and clicked back the latch on the door.

Mason boldly pushed open the door, stood aside for Della to enter, then followed her into the dimly lighted room, and closed the door behind him.

Della Street crossed over to the woman lying on the bed and groped for her pulse.

"She's alive!" Della Street said.

"The lights," Mason said crisply. "Pull the shades first."

Della Street jerked down the shades, ran over and switched on the light.

Mason glanced at the bottle of sleeping tablets by the side of the bed, picked up the newspaper on the floor, glanced at it.

"She must have taken them yesterday," Della said.

"This afternoon," Mason interrupted curtly. "This is a late edition of the afternoon paper."

He dropped the paper, shook the sleeper, said, "Towels, Della. Cold water. Fast."

Della Street grabbed towels, turned on the cold water in the bathroom. Mason slapped Marcia Winnett with cold towels until the eyelids flickered open.

"What is it?" she asked thickly.

Mason said to Della Street, "Run

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down to the drug store, Della. Get an emetic. Have room service send up some black coffee."

"How about a doctor?"

"Not if we can avoid it. Let's hope she hasn't had the tablets down long enough to get the full effects."

Marcia Winnett tried to say something but the words were unintelligible. She dropped back against Mason's shoulder.

Thirty minutes later Mason and Della Street assisted Marcia Winnett from the bathroom. There was a dead, lacklustre look about her eyes but she could talk now, and the coffee was beginning to take effect.

Mason said, "Concentrate on what I'm telling you. I'm a lawyer. I'm retained to represent you."

"By whom?"

"Your husband."

"No, no, he mustn't . . . he can't . . ."

Mason said, "I'm *your* lawyer. Your husband retained me to help you. I don't have to tell him anything."

She sighed wearily, said, "Let me go. It's better this way."

Mason shook her once more into wakefulness. "You went riding Monday morning. You talked with a man in a trailer. He made demands on you. You had to have money and have it at once. You didn't dare to ask your husband for it."

Mason waited for an answer. She made none. Her eyelids drooped and raised as if by a conscious effort.

Mason said, "You went back to the house. You canceled the insurance on your jewelry because you were too conscientious to stick the insurance company. You arranged to have some repairs made to a window on the side of your bedroom so that a ladder would be handy. You got up in the night, went out to the balcony, and dumped your jewelry into the swallow's nest. Then you started screaming."

Her face might have been a mask.

Mason went on, "You had waited until Tuesday to stage the burglary. You knew that it would be too obvious if it happened Monday night, the day you had canceled the insurance. Wednesday morning you found an opportunity to get most of the jewelry out of the swallow's nest. There was one piece you overlooked. Now then, suppose you tell me what happened after that."

She said, with the drowsy calm of one who discusses a distant event, "I wanted to kill him. I can't remember whether I did or not."

"Did you shoot him?"

"I can't remember a thing that happened after I left the house."

Mason glanced at Della Street, said, "If I'm going to help you, I have to know what hold that man had on you."

"His name is Harry Drummond. He was my first husband."

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"You were divorced?"

"I *thought* I was divorced. There were reasons why *I* couldn't go to Nevada. I gave him the money. He went to live in Nevada. From time to time he sent me reports of how things were coming. Twice he asked for more money. Then he wrote me the divorce had been granted. He was lying. He'd gambled the money away. There never had been a divorce."

"When did you find this out?"

"Monday morning," she said. "He was clever. He'd kept in touch with me. He knew I rode down along that bridle path. He parked his trailer there. Mrs. Victoria Winnett doesn't like to have people camp there, so I rode down to ask whoever was in the trailer to please move on to the public camp grounds."

"You had no idea who was in the trailer?"

"Not until Harry opened the door and said, 'Hello, Marcia. I thought it was about time you were showing up.' "

"What did he want?"

"Money."

"And he threatened you with—what?"

"The one weapon Claude couldn't stand—notoriety."

"So you promised to get him money?"

"I promised to get him my jewelry. He had to have money at once. He said someone was putting screws on him for cash."

"You were to meet him there when?"

"Wednesday morning."

"So you manipulated this fake burglary on Tuesday night after canceling your insurance on Monday. Then you took him the jewelry. Did he ask you how you had managed to get your hands on the jewelry?"

"Yes. I told him the whole story. I told him it was all right to pawn it because the Winnetts wouldn't report the burglary to the police."

"And then what happened?"

"I can't remember."

"What can't you remember?"

"I can't remember a thing from the time . . . from the time Harry took the jewelry. He made some sneering remark, and I remember becoming very angry and then . . . then my mind went entirely blank."

"Did you have a revolver with you when you went down to the trailer Wednesday morning?" Mason asked.

"Yes."

"Where did you get it?"

"From a bureau drawer."

"Whose gun was it?"

"I don't know. I think it was . . . Mrs. Winnett's gun—pearl-handled. I thought I might need some protection. It was a crazy idea, but I took it along."

"Where is that gun now?"

"I don't know. I tell you I can't remember a thing that happened after I gave him the jewelry and he made that sneering remark."

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"Did he make some further demands on you? Did he tell you to meet him at an isolated trailer park last night?"

"I don't know. I can't remember."

"*Did* you meet him there?"

"I can't remember."

"Did you," Mason asked, "rent an automobile from a drive-yourself agency about two blocks down the street?"

Her forehead puckered into a frown. "I seem to have a faint recollection of doing something like that, but I . . ." She shook her head. "No, I can't remember."

Mason said impatiently, "Why don't you come clean? You were clever enough to read the obituary notices and pretend to be the daughter of a woman who had just died. I'm trying to help you. At least tell me what I'm up against."

"I don't know. I can't remember."

Mason motioned toward the bottle of sleeping tablets. "And you thought you could take this way out and it would help?"

"I don't know. I guess I must have been . . . Perhaps I hadn't been sleeping at all and I just took too large a dose. I can't remember."

Mason turned to Della Street. "Willing to take a chance, Della?"

She nodded. "Anything you say, chief."

Mason said, "Put her in a car. Take her into Los Angeles. See that there's plenty of money in her purse. Take her to a *private* hospital. Under no circumstances give *your* name or address. Put on the rush act. Tell the first nurse you meet that this woman accosted you on the street and asked you to help her find out who she was. That you think it's a racket of some sort, but that she seems to have money and if she needs any assistance, the hospital is the place where she should get it. Then get out of there fast."

Della nodded.

Mason turned to Marcia Winnett. "You heard what I said?"

"Yes . . . I . . . you mustn't take chances for me. I know that I must have killed him. I can't remember the details, Mr. Mason, but I killed him. I *think* it was in self-defense. I can't remember."

"I know," Mason said gently. "Don't worry about it. Remember you're a widow now. Don't get your memory back, and the next time you see me remember I'm a stranger. I'm going to try to help you. Get started, Della. Drive with the window open. Let her get lots of cold air. Get her to a hospital."

"How'll *you* get back?" Della asked.

"I'll have one of Drake's men pick me up."

The gravel on the driveway caused the wheels to slide as Mason slammed on the brakes. The car skidded at a sharp angle and Mason didn't even bother to straighten it out. He snapped off the lights and

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the ignition, leaped out and headed up the steps of the Winnett mansion, pushed open the door, and strode into the drawing room unannounced.

Mrs. Victoria Winnett and Daphne Rexford were lingering over liqueurs, talking in low voices.

Mrs. Winnett's smile was distantly friendly. *"Really,* Mr. Mason," she said, "you're rather late—for dinner."

The lawyer merely nodded, glanced at Daphne Rexford.

Mrs. Winnett reached for the bell. "I presume I can get you something," she said. "But after this, if you don't mind . . ."

"Let the food go," Mason said. "I want to talk with you."

The finger which had been touching the bell remained motionless. She said, *"Really,* Mr. Mason," in a voice that indicated a polite rebuke.

Daphne Rexford hurriedly arose. "If you'll excuse me, I have a telephone call to make."

"Sit down, my dear. After all, I can't permit this human tornado to come bursting in on our tête-à-tête with . . ."

Mason caught Daphne Rexford's eye, jerked his head.

She made a feeble attempt at a smile and left the room.

"Really, Mr. Mason," Mrs. Winnett said, her voice now quite cold. "My attachment to my son is such that I am willing to make all allowances for his friends. Even so . . ."

She let her unfinished sentence carry its own meaning.

Mason drew up a chair and sat down. "Where's the Major?"

"He was called out about twenty minutes ago."

"You're fond of Daphne Rexford, aren't you?"

"Of course."

"Was she in the observation tower Monday?"

"Really, Mr. Mason, I'm not on the witness stand."

"You're going to be," Mason said. "I'm afraid you've been drinking."

"If you think this is a joke," Mason said, "just keep on stalling. Time is precious. The officers may be out here any minute."

"Officers?"

"Officers. Cops. Detectives. Plainclothes men. Newspaper photographers. Walking around here with their hats on, throwing cigarettes on the rugs, taking flashlight pictures with captions like *Society Leader Insists on Innocence.*"

That last did it. Mason saw her wince.

"You're a good poker player, but you can't bluff now. This is a showdown, Mrs. Winnett."

"Just what do you want?"

"To know all that you know."

She took a quick breath. "I know some trouble has developed between Marcia and Claude. I think that Marcia has left him. I hope she has."

"Why?"

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"Because I don't feel that they are destined to be happy together."

"No, I mean why has she left him?"

"I don't know."

"Make a guess."

"I can't."

"You know something about what happened on Monday?"

"On *Monday*? No."

"Was Daphne in the cupola on Monday?"

"I think she was."

"Did she come to you and tell you anything about what she saw either Monday or Wednesday?"

"Mr. Mason, you're being impertinent!"

Mason said, "You found out something about Marcia. You thought she had involved the family's good name, and took it on yourself to try and avoid notoriety. Your attempt backfired. I'm trying to find out just how badly it backfired."

"You can't prove any of these things you're saying, Mr. Mason."

"That," Mason said, "is only because I haven't the facilities at my command that the police have. The police may prove it."

"They won't," she said coldly. "I have told you absolutely everything I know."

Mason pushed back his chair, started for the door which led to the patio, then abruptly whirled, tiptoed swiftly back to the drawing room door, and jerked it open.

Daphne Rexford, plainly embarrassed, tried to pretend she had just been approaching the door. "Heavens," she said laughing, "I thought we were going to have a collision, Mr. Mason. You seem in a hurry." She tried to push easily on past him.

Mason barred her way. "You were listening."

"Mr. Mason, how *dare* you say anything like that?"

"Come in," Mason said. "Let's have it out. Let's . . . no, on second thought, I think I'll talk with you alone. Come on."

Mason took her arm. She drew back.

Mrs. Winnett said, "Mr. Mason is completely overstepping the prerogatives of a guest. I dislike to ask him to leave in my son's absence, but . . ."

Mason said to Daphne Rexford, "Police are going to be swarming over the place before midnight. Do you want to talk to me or do you want to talk to them?"

Daphne Rexford said over her shoulder to Mrs. Winnett, "Good heavens, Victoria, let's humor the man! I'll be back in a few minutes."

Without waiting for an answer from Victoria Winnett, she smiled disarmingly at Mason and moved away from the drawing room. "Come on, where do you want to talk?"

"Over here's good enough," Mason said, stopping in a corner of the library.

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Daphne Rexford stood facing him. "What," she asked in a low voice, "are the police going to be investigating?"

Mason met her eyes. "Murder."

"Who . . . . who was killed?"

"Let's talk first about what *you* know," Mason said. "You're the one who has the trick right eye. Mrs. Winnett has been covering up for you."

"I'm afraid I don't know what you mean."

"Whenever you look through the binoculars," Mason explained, "you have to move the right eyepiece in order to see clearly, don't you?"

"What if I do?"

Mason said, "*You* were the one who was watching Marcia on Monday. What did you see?"

"Nothing. I . . ."

"Were you here Monday? Were you in the observation cupola?"

"I believe I was."

"You're over here quite a bit?"

"Yes. Victoria and I are very good friends. She's an older woman, of course, but I like her. I like what she stands for and . . ."

"And like to be near Major Winnett and see as much of him as you can?"

"Certainly not," she said indignantly.

"We'll let it go at that for the time being," Mason said. "Now, about Monday, what did you see?"

"Nothing. I . . ."

"You were up in the tower?"

"Yes. I go there quite frequently. I study birds, and I write poetry. I can get inspiration up there . . ."

"And keep an eye on Major Winnett's wife when she's around the grounds, I suppose?"

"Mr. Mason, that's unfair."

"All right. You saw her Monday. *What* did you see?"

"I . . . nothing."

Mason said, "You saw her go into that orange trailer that was parked down in the trees . . ."

"It wasn't orange. It was green."

Mason grinned at her.

"All right," she said. "Don't think you're trapping me. I just happened to notice Marcia riding, and then I saw a house trailer parked in the trees."

"Did you see her go in?"

"I saw her tie up her horse and walk over toward the trailer. I wasn't interested. I returned to the poetry I was writing."

"How long was she in there?"

"I don't know."

"Why did you watch her?"

"I didn't watch her. I was looking at birds."

"You had a pencil and a pad of paper up there with you?"

"Yes, of course. I told you I write poetry. One doesn't write on the walls, Mr. Mason. I keep pencil and paper in the drawer of the table up there."

"You used the binoculars to get the license number of the automobile. You marked it down?"

"No."

"When were you up there last?"

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"Why . . . why, today."

"Do you go up there every day?"

"Not every day, but quite frequently."

"Have you been up every day this week?"

"I . . . I guess I have. Yes."

The telephone rang a sharp, strident summons.

Mason waited, listening, heard the butler answer it. Then the butler walked with unhurried dignity across the library to the drawing room, said something to Mrs. Winnett. She went to the telephone.

Mason heard her say, "Hello, Claude darling . . . Yes, dear . . . he's here; I'm afraid, Claude, that there has been some misunderstanding. Mr. Mason's activities are hardly such as one would connect with a mining matter. He has shown quite an interest in what Marcia . . ."

Mason walked over, gently pushed her aside, took the receiver from her hand, and said into the telephone, "Okay, Major, I've got it now. Get out here at once."

Major Winnett's voice was harsh with anger. "Just what do you mean, Mr. Mason?"

Mason said, "Your mother is trying to protect somebody. Daphne Rexford is trying to protect somebody. There's only one person I can think of whom they'd both go to such lengths to protect. That's you. If you get out here fast, we *may* be able to beat the police to it."

"What do you mean?"

"You know damn well what I mean," Mason said and hung up.

Major Winnett's limp was more noticeable as he moved across the drawing room to confront Perry Mason. "I don't know exactly what's been going on here," he said angrily, "but as far as I'm concerned, our relationship is ended."

Mason said, "Sit down."

"I'm waiting to drive you to town, Mason, in case you don't have a car. If you do, I'll go with you to your room and you can pack up."

Mason said, "As nearly as I can put things together, you had previously discovered the trailer parked down in the trees. You were suspicious. You went up to the observation tower and saw Marcia go to the trailer and then later on saw the car and trailer go away. You took down the license number of the car. You looked up the man who owned that car. After that you kept a pretty close watch on what was going on.

"You didn't say anything when Marcia canceled the insurance on her jewelry and then had such an opportune burglary. You were very careful not to call the police because you knew the police would tab it as an inside job. You let your wife think it was because your mother didn't want any notoriety but you got the jewelry and hid it in that twelve-gauge shotgun. After that you kept a pretty good watch on

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your wife. Where did you get the jewelry?"

"Mason," Winnett said coldly. "If you don't leave this house at once, I'm going to call the servants and have you put out."

Mason brushed aside Major Winnett's angry statement with a gesture. "You'll have to hire more servants, then," he said, and then went on. "When the trailer came back on Wednesday and Marcia went down there the second time, you decided to investigate. When you got down there, you found you had a fight on your hands. You killed Harry Drummond. Then you locked up the trailer, came back to the house, and waited until dark. Then you took the trailer with its evidence of murder, drove to a camp . . ."

"Mason, watch what you're saying. By heaven, I'll throw you out myself!"

"Parked the trailer," Mason went on smoothly, "got out, and went home. Then you felt it would add an artistic touch to have two shots fired so the *time* of the killing could be definitely fixed. You went back, sneaked into the trailer park, stood in the dark *outside* the trailer, and fired two shots in the air.

"You didn't realize that Marcia had been following you, and when she heard those shots she naturally thought you had killed Drummond out of jealousy, decided that she loved you too much to let you take the rap, and skipped out. That's the reason you didn't go to a detective agency to get someone to try to find your wife. You wanted a lawyer who specialized in murder cases—*because you knew there was going to be a murder case.*"

Major Winnett snapped his fingers. "A lot of half-baked theories!"

"You see," Mason continued, "you made a couple of fatal mistakes. One of them was that the first shot you fired missed Drummond and went clean through the trailer, leaving a hole in the double walls that clearly shows the direction taken by the bullet. When you parked that trailer in the automobile camp under the eucalyptus trees, it was dark and you didn't take the precaution of noticing where a bullet fired under such circumstances would have hit. That was a mistake, Major. As it happened, the hole in the trailer was lined up absolutely with the window of an adjoining trailer.

"At first the police will think the shot *might* have been fired from the other trailer. Then they'll make a more careful investigation and find that the direction of the bullet was the other way. Then they'll *know* that the murder wasn't committed at the trailer park. There's another little thing you hadn't thought of. At the time you moved the trailer, the body had been dead long enough for the blood to cool but the pool. Near the center still liquid. It spread around entirely cool there was blood that when the trailer swayed from side

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to side in going over irregularities in the road. That is what gives the pool of clotted blood the peculiar appearance of having little jagged streamers flowing from it."

Major Winnett was silent and motionless. His eyes were fixed on Mason with cold concentration.

"So," Mason went on, "you knew that when police started to investigate, they would find the dead man had been Marcia's first husband. You knew they would then start looking for her. When they found that she had skipped out, you knew what would happen. And so you came to me."

Major Winnett cleared his throat. "You made a statement that Marcia had followed me. Do you have any evidence to back that up?"

Mason said, "It's a logical deduction from . . ."

"That's where you're wrong. Come to my room, I want to talk with you."

Mason said, "You haven't much time. The police have found the body. They're going to be out here looking for Marcia as soon as they have completed an identification and checked up on the man's history."

"All right," Winnett said, "come pretend Mother, you and Daphne this. I'll talk when I've heard any of

Major Winnett later."

room, opened a portable bar to his out a bottle of whiskey.

Mason refused with a gesture, then when Winnett had poured out a drink, the lawyer reached over and poured half of that drink back into the bottle. "Just enough to give yourself a bracer," he warned, "not enough to give you a letdown afterwards. You're going to be talking with the police pretty soon. Start talking with me now."

Winnett said, "I didn't know Marcia went to visit the man in the trailer on Monday. I did know that Marcia went to the trailer on Wednesday."

"*How* did you know?"

"I was watching her."

"Why were you watching her?"

"Someone told me she had been to the trailer on Monday."

"Who?"

"My mother."

"What did you do?"

"After she left the trailer on Wednesday, I went down there to see who was in the trailer and find out why my wife was having a rendezvous."

"What did you find?"

"I found the man dead. I found Marcia's jewelry spread out on a table in front of him. I realized what must have happened. I saw that one shot had gone into the man's heart. One had apparently gone past his head and into the wall of the trailer."

"All right," Mason said, "it's your story. What did you do then?"

"I took Marcia's jewelry and locked up the trailer. I came home. I waited until after dark, then

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moved the trailer to a trailer camp I knew of, where I parked it. I got out and left the trailer and walked to where I had parked my own car earlier in the day. I had driven home before I realized that I could completely throw the police off the scent by making it appear as if the murder had been committed late that night in the trailer camp. So I returned, stood near the trailer, fired two shots into the air, then ran to my car and came back home. I thought Marcia was in bed. But when, after a couple of hours, I went up, I found she wasn't there, that she had left that note. That's why I came to you. I needed your help. That's the truth, so help me."

Mason said, "You wrote down the license number of that automobile. Later on you tried to cover it up by adding some words and some figures. . . ."

"Mr. Mason, I swear I did not."

"Who did then?"

"I don't know."

"Someone wrote down the license number of the car," Mason said, "4E4705, then tried to camouflage it by working in a number of other figures and writing at the top *These numbers called*—but a mistake was made in the addition. I . . wait a minute . . ."

Mason stood motionless, his eyes lidded with concentration.

"Perhaps," Major Winnett suggested, "it was . . ."

Mason motioned him to silence, then after a moment he picked up the telephone, dialed the hotel where Drake had established an office, and when he had Drake on the line, said, "Hello, Paul, Perry talking. I think I've got it. There was no mistake in addition."

"I don't get it," Drake said, "the total should be 49″37818. Actually it's 49″37817."

"And that figure is right," Mason said. "The number we want is 4E4704."

"But the license number was 4E4705."

Mason said, "What happens when you have two cars? You are given license numbers in numerical order. Look up license number 4E-4704. You can start your search in Room 613 there at the hotel."

Mason slammed the telephone receiver and nodded to Major Winnett. "We've got one more chance. It's slim. The next time you go to a lawyer, don't be so smart. Tell him the truth. Where's your mother's room?"

"In the other wing at the far end of the corridor."

"And the nurse's room?" Mason asked. "That must be a communicating room?"

"It is."

Mason said, "Let's go."

Helen Custer, answering their knock, seemed somewhat flustered. "Why, good evening, I, ah . . ."

Mason pushed his way into the room. Major Winnett hesitated a moment, then followed. Mason kicked the door shut.

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"Police are on their way out here," Mason said to the nurse.

"The police? What for?"

"To arrest you."

"For what?"

Mason said, "That's up to you."

"What do you mean?"

Mason said, "Playing it one way, it's blackmail. Playing it the other way, it's being an accessory after the fact on a murder charge. You'd better take the rap for blackmail."

"I . . . I . . . why, *what* are you talking about?"

Mason said, "I've practiced law long enough to know that a man should never torture clues to make them point in the direction he thinks they should go. When that column of figures added up to 49E37817 and I thought it should have been 49E37818, I assumed a mistake had been made in the addition. It wasn't a mistake. You marked down the number *Cal* 4E-4704. You wanted to preserve that number but you didn't want anyone to think that it had any significance, so you added the words at the top. *These numbers* and then inserted *led* after the *Cal,* so that made it read, *These numbers called.* Then you added other numbers and then you totaled the sum. Now, you probably have less than five minutes to tell us why you wrote down 4E4704."

She glanced from Mason to Major Winnett. There was dismay in her eyes. "What makes you—"

Mason took out his watch, said, "If the police get here first, you'll be an accessory after the fact. If you use your head, you *may* be able to get by with a rap for attempted blackmail."

"I . . . I . . . oh, Mr. Mason. I can't . . ."

Mason watched the hand ticking off the seconds.

"All right," she blurted. "It was yesterday morning. I was looking for Mrs. Victoria Winnett. I thought she was up in the observation tower. I went up there. She wasn't there. The binoculars were adjusted so that they pointed down to that grove of trees. I just happened to look through them and saw the trailer. A light coupé was parked beside the big Buick that was attached to the trailer. A man and a woman were having a struggle of some sort. The man tried to strike her and the woman reached into her blouse. I saw the flash of a gun, then another flash. The man staggered back and the woman calmly closed the door of the trailer, got in her car, and drove away.

"Through the binoculars I got a look at the number of her automobile. It was Cal 4E4704. I wrote it down on a piece of paper, intending to tell the police. Then . . . well, then I . . . thought . . ."

"What did you do with the piece of paper?" Mason asked.

"I didn't want that number to seem too conspicuous, so I wrote down other things, just as you said."

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"The first number you wrote on a single sheet of paper that was on the table and not on the pad. When you wrote the rest of it, you had placed the paper on the pad."

"I . . . I guess I did."

Mason pointed to the telephone. "Ring up police headquarters," he said, "tell them what you saw. Tell them that it's been bothering you, that you thought you should have reported it to the police but Mrs. Winnett is so opposed to any form of publicity that you didn't know just what to do; that tonight you asked Mrs. Winnett about it and she told you to telephone the police at once; that the reason you didn't do so before was because the trailer was gone when you looked again and you supposed that the man hadn't been hurt and had driven the trailer away."

"If I do that," she said, "then I . . ."

"Then you stand about one chance in ten of beating the rap all around," Mason said grimly. "Don't do it, and you're stuck. What did you do—actually?"

"I looked up the license number. I found that the car was registered in the name of a Mrs. Harry Drummond. I located her and while I wasn't crude or anything . . . I wanted to open up a beauty shop . . . well, she agreed to finance me."

Once more Mason pointed to the telephone. "Get police headquarters. Come on, Major. Let's go."

Out in the corridor Major Winnett said, "But how about my wife, Mason? How about my wife? That's the thing that bothers me—"

"And it damned well should bother you," Mason said. "She must have seen you driving the trailer Wednesday night and followed you to the place where you parked it. She went in, found Drummond dead, and thought you had been trying to avenge the family's good name. You can see now what happened. She gave Drummond money to get a divorce. He told her he'd secured one. She married again. Drummond made the mistake of also marrying again. When the blowoff came, his second wife threatened to prosecute him for bigamy unless he gave her money. The only way he had to get money was to put the pressure on Marcia. She was too conscientious to ask you for money or to try and stick the insurance company for money, so she staged a fake burglary, cached her jewelry in the swallow's nest, then turned over the jewelry to him. When the second Mrs. Drummond came for her money, all her husband had to offer her was jewelry. She thought it was hot. That started a fight and she shot him."

"But how am I going to explain —about moving the body?" Major Winnett asked.

"You're not going to explain one damn thing," Mason said. "What do you think you have a lawyer for? Get in my car. Let the nurse put the police on a hot trail."

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It was nearing midnight when Perry Mason and Paul Drake walked into metropolitan police headquarters with a description of Marcia Winnett and a series of photographs.

"Of course," Mason explained to Sergeant Dorset, "the Major doesn't want any publicity. She had a spell of amnesia several years ago. He's afraid it *may* have returned."

Sergeant Dorset frowned at a memo on his desk. "We've picked up a woman who answers that description—amnesia—a hospital telephoned in the report. How does it happen *you're* mixed up in the case, Mason?"

"I handle the Winnetts' business."

"The county teletype says a man named Drummond was murdered. Mrs. Winnett's nurse saw it all, phoned in a report. She had the license number of the murder car, Drummond's wife."

"Indeed," Mason said, his voice showing courteous interest, but nothing else. "May we take a look at this amnesia case now? The Major is very anxious."

"And," Dorset went on, "when the county officers picked up Drummond's wife, she swore that not only was the killing in self-defense, but that the nurse had been blackmailing her. The nurse called her a liar. Mrs. Drummond's confession puts her in a poor position to claim blackmail. I understand the county is so pleased with having cracked the murder case they're washing their hands of all the rest of it."

Mason glared at Sergeant Dorset. "Will you kindly tell me what all this has to do with Major Winnett's wife?"

Dorset sighed. "I wish to hell I knew," he said, and then added significantly, "but I'll bet a hundred to one we never find out."

Mason said, "Come down to earth. That murder case is county. The sheriff's office wouldn't like a city detective sticking his nose in."

Dorset nodded. "And by the way you've arranged it, the amnesia case is city and the county men won't mess around with *that.*"

He regarded the lawyer with a scowling respect.

Mason said very positively, "I don't see what the murder has to do with all this if the sheriff's office has a solution and a confession. But one thing I do know is that if you have Major Winnett's wife here, she's suffering from a nervous ailment and if you make it worse with a lot of fool notions, you'll wish you hadn't. Do I get her now, or do I get a *habeas corpus?*"

"Hell, you get her now," Dorset said disgustedly. "I can't help feeling that if I knew everything you'd been doing in the last twelve hours I'd get a promotion and if I try to find out, I'll be back pounding pavements. Damn it!"

He picked up the telephone, said into the transmitter, "Send that amnesia case number eighty-four on the night bulletin up to my office."

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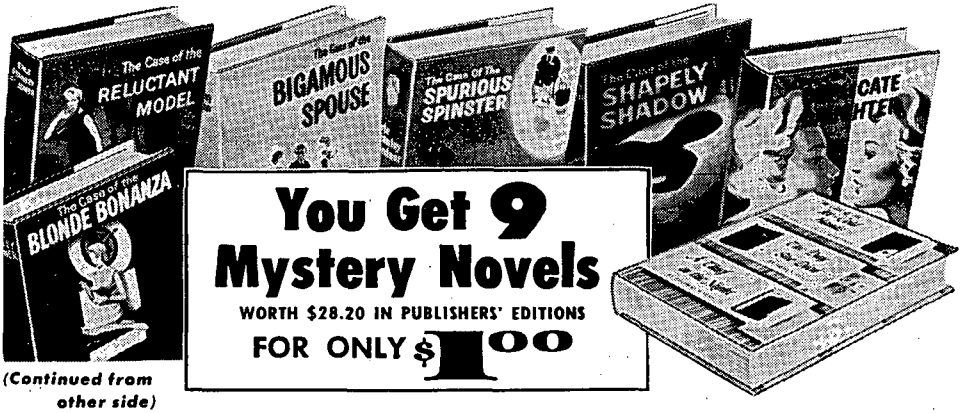
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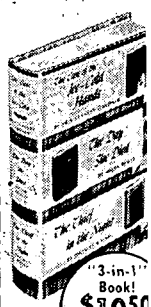

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